



LUTHERAN EDUCATION

A Journal of the Faculty of Concordia University, River Forest

CONTENTS

SPRING 2004 VOL 139/NO. 3

Cultural Issues

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 165 | Lutheran Advantages in Multiethnic Mission |
| 180 | The Christian Classroom in a World of Cultural Confusion |
| 190 | The Relationship Between Fatherless Children and Their Concept of the Fatherhood of God |
| 213 | Ministering to Un-churched, Urban, At-Risk Children |
| 228 | Outreach Through Lutheran Schools: Hands Stretched to the Lost |
| 234 | Poised on the Edge of Chaos |

Lutheran Education

Published since 1865 by the Faculty of
Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois
Volume 139 - Number 3 - Spring 2004

- Publisher:** Ralph Reinke, CEO; Manfred Boos, Acting President,
Concordia University, River Forest, Ill.
- Editors:** William Rietschel, Educational Foundations
O. John Zillman, Department of Psychology
- Associate Editors:** Gary Bertels, Department of Theology
William Duey, Department of Human Performance
- Business/Editorial Assistant:** Jo Ann P.F. Kiefer
- Design/Production Assistant:** Krissé L. Paulson
- Regular Departments:**
- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Administrative Talk</i> | Glen Kuck, St. Paul Lutheran School, Chicago, Ill. |
| <i>DCE Expressions</i> | William Cullen, Department of Leadership, CURF |
| <i>Multiplying Ministries</i> | Rich Bimler, President, Wheat Ridge Ministries |
| <i>Secondary Sequence</i> | Craig Parrot, Lutheran High School, Denver, CO |
| <i>Teaching the Young</i> | Shirley Morgenthaler, Early Childhood,
Education, CURF |
| <i>Today's Lutheran Educator</i> | Jon Laabs, Executive Director,
Lutheran Education Association |

Cover Design: Del Klaustermeier

Lutheran Education (ISSN 0024-7488) is published four times per year: Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer. Subscriptions are \$10 a year and are available from *Lutheran Education Journal*, 7400 Augusta St., River Forest, IL 60305-1499.

Periodical postage paid at Napanee, IN.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Lutheran Education, 7400 Augusta St., River Forest, IL 60305-1499.

Lutheran Education is available on microfilm. Write to University Microfilms, North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Printed in USA.

Lutheran Education has been selected as the professional journal of the Lutheran Education Association (LEA). Members of the LEA receive the journal as part of membership benefits. Inquiries regarding membership may be addressed to LEA, 7400 Augusta Street, River Forest, IL 60305-1499.

In This Issue: Cultural Issues

- 165 **Lutheran Advantages in Multiethnic Mission**
by John Arthur Nunes
- 180 **The Christian Classroom in a World of Cultural Confusion**
by Paul K. Gossman
- 190 **The Relationship Between Fatherless Children and Their
Concept of the Fatherhood of God**
by La Verne Tolbert
- 213 **Ministering to Un-churched, Urban, At-Risk Children**
by Gary C. Newton
- 228 **Outreach Through Lutheran Schools:
Hands Stretched to the Lost**
by Willie Stallworth
- 234 **Poised on the Edge of Chaos**
by Shirley J. Miske

Departments

161 From Where I Sit: . . . Pitalls and Challenges

O. John Zillman

239 Administrative Talk: The Learned Principal vs. the Learning Principal

Glen Kuck

241 Multiplying Ministries: Hope is the Difference!

Rich Bimler

244 Our Search for Identity

Craig Parrott

246 A Final Word: Each a Child of God

Manfred Boos

From Where I Sit: Pitfalls and Challenges

O. John Zillman

Mara Schmidt, colleague of mine in the Human Performance Department, and I walked and chatted a bit on our way out of the parking garage at Concordia one morning in early spring, having arrived for work at the same time by happenstance. As we exited, we both saw the small directions-for-visitors-on-campus sign at the same time: "Pitfalls and Challenges" it read, directing visitors toward the interior of campus. As it turned out, it was the title of a continuing education conference being held on campus that day, but perhaps there was more than a little allegory in the message. Actually, it reminded me of the sign in the haunted forest in the film, *The Wizard of Oz*, "I'd turn back if I were you" If it had been a Monday morning instead of Tuesday, I may have emulated Bert Lahr's classic Cowardly Lion routine and just turned and run back to my car, gone home and back to bed, flying monkeys chasing me all the way.

Instead we just laughed, "Now that's an encouraging way to start your day!" We mused about what we might find if we went the opposite way indicated by the sign, turning east instead of west. Pitfalls and Challenges one direction or what? Perfection and Complacency?

Pitfalls and Challenges. There is likely no better description of the whole realm addressed by the articles in this issue, "Differences and Making a Difference". One of the courses that I team-teach at River Forest is Diversity in American Society, an interdisciplinary examination of issues of race, class and gender in the United States. In the discussion of the social construction of racism, I'm not at all shy about stating to our students that, sadly, some of the most biased statements and opinions that I've ever heard have been around Lutheran churches and Lutheran schools.

For example, why is there no differentiation between "articulate" white people and those who aren't? But I've heard Lutheran educators make that distinction in reference to African-Americans.

When the student population of a Lutheran school is predominately African-American, why is it then accorded the status of an “urban” school regardless of the fact that it may actually be located in a suburban area? Why, as synodical placement director at River Forest for ten years, couldn’t I convince more than a handful of new graduates to consider Calls in real urban areas when those opportunities arose?

Why, during worship or in concert settings, do some people snicker at the kids in the Gospel choir? Okay, we’ve all heard choirs and instrumental groups of varying quality, but why does it happen even when it’s a really good Gospel choir? And what is it about not being able to clap our hands along with the kids as they praise God?

Why is it that children from Hispanic families have are said to suffer from a “language barrier” when it is they, not most of us, who will likely be fluent in two languages throughout their lives? Who has the barrier?

When and how did “in the world, but not of the world” become, “in the world - but not in that neighborhood”?

Has your board of parish education had the discussion about how to convince the white parents not to transfer their kids out when more Hispanic or black families enroll their kids in your school? Why do we have to continue to tiptoe around the “800 pound gorilla” of prejudice instead of addressing the beast by its real name?

Am I over-generalizing? Oversimplifying? Perhaps, and although each of the exemplars, above, has a basis in a real incident or observation and all have occurred recently, I very much want to believe that these don’t reflect general attitudes. But this kind of thing continues to occur with disturbing frequency.

A pitfall in considering these questions or related matters could be to dash off a semi-cynical editorial – and then do nothing. Or, to dismiss any possibility of veracity in these examples by retreating behind “our Lutheran Heritage”. Or, to perpetuate well intentioned but - if one listens carefully to the few African-American voices among us -condescending, or worse, under-funded initiatives to attempt to reach higher ground in understanding the differences between people. (A guiding principle in understanding denominational priorities is relatively simple: Just follow the money.)

Or we can listen to the challenge in what the authors of the following articles have to say.

John Arthur Nunes, in an article as gritty as the world it addresses, suggests that lest we come to reside, ironically, in ghetto of Lutherans, that the theology of the Cross – in all of its sharp-as-a-crown-of-thorns

reality, is both the ultimate weapon for surgical strikes in the war on sin in the world and the ultimate means by which those wounded will recover integrity, worth and ultimately, the wholeness for which God created them.

Paul Gossman, the multi-lingual missionary, mountain climber and scholar-in-the-parish turns potential retreat into advance in a biblically based rationale for multi cultural knowledge and specific strategies and suggestions for teachers in Lutheran schools. His writing is informed by and engages his own experiences as a missionary in the Philippines, Peru and in Melrose Park, IL, two miles west of this campus.

LaVerne Tolbert vigorously engages the issue of the vast numbers of American children from all backgrounds who grow up without a father present in the home.

Gary C. Newton addresses the matter of efforts to bring the love of Christ to the streets where some kids live their lives without Him, places that seem to be beyond the reach of traditional outreach efforts. There are no easy answers, but some important questions are initiated.

Willie Stallworth continues the outreach theme and offers thought-provoking suggestions on how Lutheran school faculties can become proactive and intentional in outreach efforts. The beginning point is a deliberate change in mind-set.

Shirley Miske assures us, as she did those of us who were present for her December 2002 commencement address at Concordia University, River Forest, that being on the edge of chaos isn't necessarily a bad place to be for the committed Christian. God's Word has a way of bringing order to things in subtle yet powerful ways.

The challenges presented by each writer, respectively, fall under what Andrea Avaysian (1995) terms "allied behavior", specifically, deliberate actions by those who would be regarded as dominant groups in society who engage in "intentional, overt, consistent activity that challenges prevailing patterns of oppression, makes privileges that are so often invisible visible, and facilitates the empowerment of persons targeted by oppression (Avaysian, 1995 in Rothenberg, 2004).

We are called to ally ourselves with all who seek to escape the snares of the Oppressor regardless of the guise in which he wraps his intent – the overt despair of racism, inequality, poverty of the body, mind, spirit or the more subtle but no less destructive temptation of complacency in the face of these. The challenge has never been greater; the pitfalls have never been so dangerous – our Lord's loving example and the power of his Word has always been our "trusty shield and weapon". Onward! –LEA

References

Avaysian, A. (1995), "*Interrupting the cycle of oppression: The role of allies as agents of change.*" in Rothenberg, P. (Ed.) Race, class and gender in the United States (6th Edition) (2004), New York: Worth Publishers.

John Zillman is Professor of Psychology at Concordia University, River Forest and co-editor of Lutheran Education.

Lutheran Advantages in Multiethnic Mission

John Arthur Nunes

Commitment to the Lutheran Confessions is centered in the timeless truth of salvation in Christ alone. Yet, as Rietschel (2000) has significantly noted: “our world continues to change. As part of that world, Lutheran schools will also continue to change” (p. 157). This unprecedented time of change invites us to reconsider what it means to be anchored in a distinctively Lutheran identity. A perplexing dilemma for Lutherans arises from this radically pluralistic and global culture because with changes comes blessings, cursings, and challenges.

For example, there are seven counties in Texas where 80% of the population does not speak English as a primary language. Lutherans are virtually all white and English-speaking. Or, there is Fremont, California, a relatively affluent town of 200,000 residents tucked sleepily north of San Jose on the San Francisco Bay. Yet, even here more than 137 languages are regularly spoken, which exceeds polyglot New York City. Or, consider that by 2015 cities like Dhaka will have 22.8 million people and Mumbai will have 22.6 million people. Many of us haven’t yet learned the names of these Asian mega-cities. Their greatest export is people—the majority of whom do not confess Christ as Savior.

Striving and Surviving

A primal urge among people living in disadvantaged and developing countries and communities is toward making their lives better. Such betterment often includes the pursuit of socioeconomic progress. In few places is this fundamental drive more dynamic than in the United States of America. Oozing from the

soul of America there flows abundant lucrative, promises of happiness, freedom and prosperity. Thus, American life is essentially characterized by fluidity and movement on this constantly pulsating axis from poverty to prosperity and vice versa.

Witness the migration of poorer Americans of every race, from the South to the North, in the first half of the twentieth century. For example, among African Americans in 1890, 90 percent of the population was concentrated in the rural South. Yet, by the mid 1930s almost 50 percent of the black population lived in urban and northern communities. This tide was reversed among all Americans in the last three decades of 20th century as the economic viability of the Great Lakes' region (often pejoratively referred to as the Rust Belt) evaporated in inverse proportion to the economic growth of the Sun Belt in the southwestern section of the nation.

Lutheran schools have tended to respond well to these demographic trends—at least better than have Lutheran congregations. In fact, statistically speaking, no religious community in the United States has responded worse than Lutheran congregational communities. Certainly, groups affiliated with Lutheran Services in America have, in the name of Jesus, been involved in stellar human care provision across a wide spectrum of demographics.

In 2001, the City University of New York released a study of religious life in America widely regarded as the most comprehensive work of its kind. The American Religious Identification Survey finds that Lutherans (without respect to denominational affiliation, i.e. ELCA, LCMS, WELS) are the most Anglo—the most white and English speaking religious group in America (Exhibit 13, p. 35). The bombshell for most Lutherans is that this number exceeds Mormon or Jewish groups. Some have gone so far as to suggest that all American Lutherans—Asian, black, white and Hispanic—possess a structural incapacity to make disciples of the nations, of all the “ethnics” here in America (Matthew 28:19). In other words, there is a “structural sin”¹ corporately preventing the centrifugal transfer of the saving message of the cross of Jesus Christ: namely, that eternal salvation is a gift of grace alone, acquired by faith alone, revealed in Word and sacraments alone.

AMERICAN RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION SURVEY, 2001
THE GRADUATE CENTER
OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
(White, Non-Hispanic Membership)

Catholic 64%
Baptist 64%
Methodist 86%
Lutheran 96%
Presbyterian 91%
Pentecostal 58%
Episcopalian/Anglican 89%
Jewish 92%
Mormon 91%
Churches of Christ 89%
Non-denominational 73%
Congregational/UCC 93%
Jehovah's Witnesses 46%
Assemblies of God 80%
Muslim/Islamic 15%
Buddhist 32%
Seventh Day Adventist 67%

The prescient assessment of Preuss (2000) deserves wider hearing. He remarks, in part:

there are huge global issues of which we remain ignorant and even unconcerned (for example) the shift to post-colonialist approaches to missions. We must avoid becoming parochial and thus irrelevant. We have too much to contribute to these debates to keep ourselves ghettoed off to the side, dealing merely with our own peculiar issues. (p. 41)

Keeping all this good theology locked up to ourselves is a scandal deserving a major blue-ribbon investigation—or, better yet, corporate repentance. The whole church needs to be its knees for this. How can we share more effectively our theological treasures with those who are different than us? Certainly not by entrenchment, but by engagement, getting out the Gospel into the *whole* world to everyone!

We Have Too Much to Contribute

So what can Lutheran congregations learn from Lutheran schools? Historically, Lutheran educational institutions—from preschools to universities—have provided a preferred educational opportunity for many among these economically disadvantaged communities. For example, among African Americans, there is the long legacy of quality, life-transforming education in Lutheran schools. Rosa J. Young opened her first rural school building in Rosebud, Alabama with October 1912 with seven students. At the recommendation of Booker T. Washington, she affiliated her school and her faith with the Lutheran Church.²

Waldemar “Bill” Rojas was born into what might be termed humble circumstances. He was raised and reared by his mother only in the intensely urban neighborhoods of East Harlem and South Bronx. Al-

Historically, Lutheran educational institutions—from preschools to universities—have provided a preferred educational opportunity for many among these economically disadvantaged communities.

though his mother had but a minimal education herself, she provided her children with the best: museums, concerts and reading. According to Dr. Rojas, the family would not have “made it” without the ministry of the Rev. Albert Paul Abel and the support of the members of Atonement Lutheran Church. Pastor Abel directed him to a higher education called Concordia College in the higher socio-economic community of Bronxville, New York. From there, Rojas achieved further at Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois. He later became a nationally known educator, and superintendent of San Francisco, then Dallas public schools.³

During the 1990s Steve Atwater was a star player in the safety position for the Denver Broncos in the National Football League. Eight times he played in the NFL all-star game, the Pro-Bowl. But years before he was a first round draft pick from the University of Arkansas in 1989, he was a high school student-athlete at a Lutheran school in St. Louis. His former coach, Mr. Paul Crisler, the current principal at Lutheran North, remembers Mr. Atwater as an “A-one, first class” Christian athlete. Crisler recalls how Atwater’s single mother intentionally desired the environment of a Gospel-centered culture for her son.

And there are others. The children of Malcolm X were matriculated by his widow in Lutheran schools in Queens, New York. Likewise, Jerome

Bettis, star running back of the Pittsburgh Steelers, attended Detroit Urban Lutheran School. Even now, in Dallas, Texas, the son of Bishop T. D. Jakes, who operates one of America's largest churches, the Potter's House, attends a Lutheran elementary school. And this, in spite of the fact that the Potter's House has its own elementary school.

In listening to and considering the strength of effective schools in cross cultural settings, I have observed that these communities:

- believe that people are attracted to excellence;
- value highly the standard of St. Paul concerning the things that should occupy our attention, Philippians 4:8, 9;
- educate as a means of serving, not being served, or sustaining the church;
- are compassionately driven—to touch and transform lives with the Gospel;
- are courageously engaged with at-risk people;
- are relentlessly confident in a First Article vision of the world, though not in an arrogant manner toward the material realm;
- are exuberantly alive in Christ (not boringly pedantic, dead orthodox, or deadeningly self-righteous)
- are concretely realistic in hope, not in a vaguely optimistic, or naive manner;
- are energetically empowered by the Word and Sacraments knowing there's no private pipeline to God, but that Christ comes to His people: *in the Word,*
 in the water of baptism,
 in the bread and wine,
 and in the sign of cross,
 for the forgiveness of sin.
- are subservient to history, not disrespectful of anybody's past;
- are engaged with their community, not insulated, isolated, disconnected or distant;
- are active in love, not inactive, inert or inattentive;
- are effective in the Spirit, not in their own might or strength;
- wear Lutheranism as “underwear” to provide theological support for faith orientation, mindful to avoiding blurring the distinction between deeply rooted private Christian conviction and deeply disturbed, public religious confusion;
- do grassroots theology as a missional principle, not in terms of the heretical practice of inventing new theology, but in terms of taking orthodoxy to the streets;

- see Lutheran values as transferable;
- know that caring communities will transcend their walls;
- know that people know when they are valued
- enlist school leaders who represent the cultural groups in their schools.

McNeil (2001) puts it like this: “In short, there are too many ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse children for school leaders to ignore. The importance of visible role models representing and supporting the diversity in our school age population cannot be underestimated” (p. 9).

Two Lutheran values that give Lutheran schools and churches an advantage are:

1. A working theology of the cross
2. An incarnational/sacramental realization

1. A Working Theology of the Cross

James Baldwin (1963) once wrote:

“Life is tragic simply because the earth turns and the sun inexorably rises and sets, and one day, for each of us, the sun will go down for the last, last time. Perhaps the whole root of our trouble, the human trouble is that we will sacrifice all the beauty of our lives, will imprison ourselves in totems, taboos, crosses, blood sacrifices, steeples, mosques, races, armies, flags, nations, in order to deny the fact of death, which is the only fact we have.” (p. 91)

What Baldwin has spoken of the human predicament is right and true, but he has not spoken enough. Even for believers, death supplies the cruelest exclamation mark to the pessimistic treatise that chronicles our relationship with the things of this world. Our only hope in this world is the cross—*Ave crux spes unica*: “hail cross, our only hope.” Death is overridden, or overlooked, but is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15). Our fatal end is not anesthetically bypassed, but is surpassed by the greater fact of the resurrection—the anastasis. Because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead we have new life. Our most mortal wound is transformed, not evaded or avoided. Thus, Baldwin has under-spoken. The cross does not invite us toward a denial or escape from death. Rather, we hide behind the cross. Baldwin rightly suggests, that would be “the whole root of our trouble,” the wellspring of our despair. Lutherans face squarely the cross, calling it precisely what it is—the place where

divine love is most clearly made possible, made present and presented to the world.

In some churches, especially of the Pentecostal flavor, the reality of death is indeed imprisoned. The fact of death becomes subsumed in a silent act of denial or, worse yet, in a high-volume action of emotional catharsis falsely characterized as high-energy worship. In many urban communities “a hyperspiritualization disregards the context of creation—the neighborhoods, homes, yards, and buildings where people live and work. Tragically, these are avoided and replaced with a ‘heightened’ sense of God” (Nunes, 1999, p. 46).

The theology of the cross does not paint over the tragic dynamic with a brushstroke of denial or philosophizing, but at the cross, God faces these realities for us face-to-face.

As urban school leaders struggle with the problem of pain in life, a Lutheran view of the cross provides a lens through which suffering can be interpreted. Only the Holy Spirit can bring understanding of the cross’ reality. Martin Luther (1525/1960) said:

“Direct your step to the place where the Word resounds and the sacraments are administered, and there write the title, ‘the gate of God.’” The Lutheran view of the suffering, Sacraments and Scripture converge at this critical point. As they do, faith is created. Faith is paramount as the receiving instrument the Spirit’s nurture and gifts.⁴ In spite of the supposed human preference for honeyed amusements, ear-tickling words, mellifluous solutions or sweet-sounding options, the theology of the cross is a reality theology—at the cross we see God “keepin’ it real,” (to employ an urban colloquialism).

It’s real because, as Baldwin has instructed, life’s two most inescapable and undeniable realities find us out at the cross: real sin and real death. The devil’s flaming darts sear and scar even tender young lives. Temptations terrorize even faithful teachers. Death stings deeply even when it’s expected. Seemingly rapturous relationships rupture daily and often in most schools. Good school boards go bankrupt. Wars rage at staff meetings. Sickness furtively finds its way into healthy lives without warning. The theology of the cross does not paint over the tragic dynamic with a brushstroke of denial or philosophizing, but at the cross, God faces these realities for us face-to-face. Bleeding sweat and sweating blood in the garden (Luke 22:39-46), Jesus faces his future and our future with courage not fear: real spit hitting his face, real spikes tearing his

hands and feet, and a real spear gouging beneath his ribs. God literally goes to hell and back in order to bring us back into a real relationship with God. This cross as an emphasis and focus is an advantage in a world where wealth, health and happiness are considered tantamount to being “really blessed.” Especially in some poor and immigrant communities, the pressure to succeed is both impossibly steep and overwhelmingly attractive. That’s an irony of poverty.

Paul later avows to preach nothing but this reality—nothing but Christ and him crucified. As we offer the Word to one another, the body broken and wine outpoured, the splashing water of Father, Son and Spirit, God is *really* present. But never is God present as he is in our suffering. Here, he comes in a manner we can never fully anticipate. Caring connections are made personally and surprisingly when we risk “being real” with one another.⁵

A Cross for Extreme Times

That these times are extreme is nothing new. Para-, pan-, trans-, inter-, meta-, multi-. These prefixes define everything from strange sex to *haute couture* as we settle into this new millennium. These terms also describe the contemporary confusion in religion. In this age of alloy spirituality, two or more belief systems are often fused together to suit human needs. Barely does the new product resemble the orthodoxy of the church’s first two millennia. But there is little new about these times, neither is there little new about the response of the faithful. The weapons of our warfare are spiritual. We sing liturgies and pray litanies and reach out lovingly all in the name of Jesus Christ, this world’s redeemer. Lutheran educators are animators of the biblical narrative who, through prayer and worship and work, retell the story of a Palestinian Jew named Jesus who broke into this world bringing the reign of God. These End Times began in that chaotic moment 2000 years ago when divine kingdom of peace began its final clash with the demon kingdom of destruction.

The manifestations of our world’s rebellion may continue to morph, but the root cause remains traceable. Today’s complexity is an outgrowth of the original bite in Eden: asymmetrical warfare, Internet pornography, child molestation, restless race relations, invasions of privacy, the ferocity of extreme forms of fundamentalism—whether of Islam or Christianity, a veritable global healthcare crisis. Beneath the layers of these global problems, inner cities must further contend with

- Crime,
- Poverty,

- Injustice,
- Weak social infrastructures,
- Strong structures of sin,
- Too few churches that gather the hopes and dreams of all,
- Far too many so-called ministries devoid of the pure Gospel but full of legalism, emotionalism and pie-in-the-sky-ism.

The church of Jesus Christ responds with hands uplifted in prayer, like incense, purifying the stench of sin from the suites to the streets. We pray for slick-looking thugs slouching insouciantly on urban street corners whose existence is justified and glorified in rap music videos, but we pray also for the sleekly appareled elite white-collar thugs sitting smugly in suburban corner office suites. Some of these are greedy merchants of the media who well understand the ancient appeal of images use their power to move product with gratuitous violence, unspeakably offensive language and solicitous sex. We have another sign—the cross; and another image—the one who is the very image of God—the Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The first impulse may be to run with our cross and our Christ in tow, but the calling of Lutheran educators inheres a deep conviction toward the world, with engagement. The cross and Christ go out into the world. We are not called to be cloistered away from the world in entrenchment. The impulsion of this call propels the faithful toward the world with a desire to make a difference for eternity with all men, women, boys and girls.

Doing a Theology of Difference

In a certain sense the popular adage ascribed to the late Boston politician Tip O’Neal, “all politics is local,” applies likewise to the Christian ministry: *all theology is local*. This cannot mean that we should ever cutely, conveniently or cavalierly change Christianity to suit our personal needs, but that we must make every effort to apply intensely the saving truth of Law and Gospel to the context in which we do theology. A pious familiarity with the Tradition is as necessary as a creative flexibility of praxis. As Richard John Neuhaus once quipped, “The historically lobotomized have nothing with which to be creative.” Confessional documents are not simply possessed or shelved, they are confessed—that is proclaimed and practiced and prayed.

Martin Luther exercised extreme caution in translating the Mass into the language of the people. His insisted on maintaining continuity with the best

of the Western rite. Of course, his work of adaptation consisted of more than mere cultural or linguistic elements, it is involved also the removal of worship forms and functions which compromised the clarion message of Christ's work.

Further, the work of theology is not contained or maintained in liturgical, catechetical or creedal categories apart from a living application, *lex vivendi*. Theology is done. Theology is a verb. Following Martin Luther, the Lutheran tradition has contended that one is a theologian who lives theologically—that is, by living, dying, and being damned through prayer, work, and the vicissitudes of life. This is the power of the cross.

2. An Incarnational/Sacramental Realization

Simply put, Christ comes to us. He does so

- in worship, especially with Word and Sacraments;
- in preaching, especially with Law and Gospel;
- in teaching, especially with Luther's Catechism;
- and in ministry, especially when an incarnational style is cultivated.

This incarnational style is based on John 1:14, "For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." One bishop has often prodded pastors toward a style of ministry he characterizes by "instantaneity" and "spontaneity." "Instantaneity" refers to the need for a rapid response, like triage, with quick diagnosis and immediate treatment.

"Spontaneity" refers to the need for improvising,

- being creative in applying our beliefs, and
- bending some man-made rules sometimes, and
- always trusting God while doing our best.

Incarnational ministry is more like jazz or Country and Western than like classical music. You cannot rehearse for some emergencies. Dwelling among people means *responding*: now, not later; responding: when they need you, not after you "get it right"; responding: almost instinctively.

How, for example, will the church respond now to the deleterious disaster caused by the decline of two-parent homes? According to www.childstats.gov, only 68 percent of children live with two parents, leaving one-third who do not.[†] Since 1980, the number of births to unmarried women has nearly doubled, from around 18 percent to approximately 33 percent.[†] Most striking is the statistic for African-Ameri-

can women, 70 percent of their children are *born* outside of their two-parent family. The correlation between poverty, self-perception and moral grounding and two parent families is direct. What does the reality of the fracture and evolution in patterns of family living have to do, for example, with Baptism, Confirmation and Christian catechesis?

Our Confessions say “we should and must insist that God does not want to deal with us human beings, [spiritually] except by means of his external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil” (The Smalcald Articles, 2000, p. 323). The word made flesh (Jesus the Christ) is made real as the inscripturated Word (the Bible), and as the visible word (the sacraments). This Word snatches fragile, fallen children from the claws and the jaws of the devil and reshapes them into the image of God.

A Sacrament for the World

The highest expression of incarnational ministry within the contemporary church and school is the sacraments. In a sense, people of faith in Jesus are themselves a sacrament (a sign of Christ’s real presence) to the world—especially now. Our age is witnessing a rising need for safe places to confess sin and find forgiveness, for communities of accountability, and godly guidance. This need for concrete contexts to personally deliver the Gospel is exacerbated by our digital age when Confession and Absolution are faked and feigned by electronic media in models that depreciate and deprecate God’s forgiving truth.

Blessed Martin Luther’s vital estimation of baptism is worthy of recovery in our communities. For Luther “Baptism was more than an initiation rite, but was virtually synonymous with the entire Christian life. Confirmation is affirmation of Baptism and Confession and Absolution is the practice of Baptism” (Scaer, 2000, p. 83).

Once in the middle of preaching at a new mission in Detroit, a notorious gang-member in church that Sunday raised his hand, interrupting the Liturgy and said, “Rev., today’s the day!” Hesitantly, cautiously, I inquired “The day for what?” “Today I’m getting baptized.” “Well,” I obliged, “thanks for informing me.” We didn’t sign him up for a twenty-week course. We placed him in the water on the spot. He needed instantaneous and spontaneous spiritual treatment. We gave him the promises of God and the benefits of Christ, as well as a radical incorporation into a new family.

One Confessional theologian of an earlier era wrote words over thirty years ago that yet resonate poignantly in our time. In neighborhoods and

schools and communities rent with linguistic tribalism and ethnic schism and economic stratification, Christ has given himself to the church as the sacrificial meal that reconciles heaven and earth, as well as brother and sister. The Eucharist transcends and forgives our sin-induced divisions and makes us in our dividedness and separation one body in Christ. Its thrust toward unity is more powerful than the divisive elements that fragment our world and our lives. The God who is one is, in the end, stronger than the demons that are legion. And ultimately even those who build the fences of race and nationality and language and ideology and denomination around the altar of Christ must, whether they will or not, suffer themselves to be united with those whom they seek to exclude, for the altar of the Eucharist is one, and its fellowship is one and its communion is one and the body that it creates is one (Piepkorn, 1972, p. 107).

Mission and sacraments parallel, confirm, corroborate, and sustain each other.

As one prayer for the Vigil of Pentecost describes our unity, or the Spirit-wrought unity working through the means of grace: May the Spirit's flame "come to rest in our hearts and heal the divisions of word and tongue, that with one voice, and one song, we may praise your name with joy and thanksgiving; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever" (Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, p. 23).

Mission and sacraments parallel, confirm, corroborate, and sustain each other. They are not enemies. Like train tracks, they run in the same direction, toward the same end. We believe, teach and confess that God the Father "has preordained his Word and sacraments as the regular means and instruments for drawing people to himself" (Formula of Concord, 2000, p. 652).

This sacramentally defined spirituality protects the integrity of our Christian witness in this pressure-packed, highly urbanized, postmodern world. Integrity implies that we must consistently test all things against Scripture and the Confessions to check whether we are caving in to worldliness like the Episcopal Church USA has recently done, or veering into a separatism that shuts out of the world, like the Amish tend to do.

I often propose a path containing both confessional fidelity and missionary energy; a path with the quick-footed, dangerous faithfulness of a Marshall Faulk-type church and school leaders who can both run and catch, and then are able to juke and cut a pattern avoiding both funda-

mentalist rigidity, as well as a philosophy of anything-goes or “sloppy agape.” The way to achieve this is to live out loud: walking by faith in Jesus, daily dying and rising in baptismal grace, daily repenting and returning to the Lord. This daily baptismal remembrance constitutes the core of the Lutheran advantage: sacramental *and* missional.

We do *what* we do because of who we are, and we are *who* we are, in part, because of *where* we live. Context matters. Incarnation matters. And since we are God’s, we are not where we are by accident. “To save us, Jesus [himself] became a part of a specific human community located at a multicultural crossroad. This was not incidental, but central to Jesus’ person and work. God purposefully chose the multicultural, multiracial, multilingual eastern Mediterranean to be the context for the sending of his Son” (Nunes, p. 61). God calls us to be engaged in the communities we serve, without losing or compromising who we are in Christ. –LEA

References

- Baldwin, J. (1963). *The fire next time*. NY: Random House. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (3rd. ed.). (2000). Washington, D. C.: United States Catholic Conference.
- City University of New York, The Graduate Center. (2001). *American religious identification survey*. Retrieved February 27, 2004 from <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/aris.pdf> Formula of Concord (XI). (2000). In R. Kolb & T. J. Wengert (Eds.), *The Book of Concord: The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*.
- Lewis, C. S. (1955). *Surprised by joy: The shape of my early life*. NY: Harcourt Brace.
- Lutheran Book of Worship*. (1978). Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Luther, M. (1525/1960). *Luther's Works*, American Edition. 9:7. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.
- McNeil, J. (2001, Winter). Defying the administrator placement odds through university and school district partnerships. *Education Leadership Review*, 2(1), 8-15.
- Nunes, J. A. (1999). *Voices from the city*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.
- Piepkorn, A. C. (1972, February). One eucharist for one world. *Concordia Theological Monthly*. 94-108.
- Preuss, J. A. O. (2000). Sources of Lutheran dogmatics: Addressing contemporary issues with the historic Christian faith. In M. S. Horton (Ed.), *A confessing theology for postmodern times*. (pp. 29-42). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Rietschel, W. C. (2000). *An introduction to the foundations of Lutheran education*. St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press.
- Scaer, D. P. (2000). *Essays on the Catechism*. Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Press.
- The Smallcald Articles (VIII). (2000). In R. Kolb & T. J. Wengert (Eds.), *The book of concord: The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Young, R. J. (1950). *Light in the dark belt: The story of Rosa Young as told by herself*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

The Rev. John Arthur Nunes has served as Visiting Professor of Urban Studies at Concordia College, New York and, most recently as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas. As of July 2004, he plans to relocate to the Chicago, IL area in order to pursue doctoral work at the Lutheran School of Theology.

Footnotes

¹ “Thus sin makes men accomplices of one another and causes concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among them. Sins give rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to divine goodness. ‘Structures of sin’ are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a ‘social sin.’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2000, p. 457).

² See, Young (1950).

³ Much of this material was related to the writer by Dr. Rojas at the Dallas Independent School Board offices on January 25, 2000.

⁴ Faith recognizes and receives the biblical characteristics of joy: a song in the heart, Colossians 3:16; a fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22, Romans 14:7; sustenance through difficult circumstances, Acts 16:25, Romans 5:3, Colossians 1:24; even in sorrow, 2 Corinthians 6:10; through tears, 2 Timothy 1:4 Joy is in God, 1 Thessalonians 3:9, Philippians 3:1; this joy is related to hope, Romans 12:12. In particular, the Philippian church was intoxicated with the joy of the Lord. This joy is connected to faith, Philippians 1:25, is symbiotic within the fellowship, Philippians 2:28-29, is indicative of readiness for martyrdom, Philippians 1:25 joy is in the Lord, is experienced temporally, but is not temporary, Philippians 4:4.

⁵ C. S. Lewis (1955) concedes that his autobiographical story treating his transition from Christianity to atheism back to Christianity is, “suffocatingly subjective” (p. 7). Arguably, what is most personally true bears also the greatest universal truth.

The Christian Classroom in a World of Cultural Confusion

Paul K. Gossman

We live in a world of cultural confusion. At no other time in our nation's history, or in the history of mankind, have the behaviors, understandings, and institutions of the world's cultures been so intermingled. Likewise, perhaps at no other time have our differences been so evident or so potentially volatile. Consider the tension and perplexity of our current involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bringing peace and stability to those lands seems almost beyond reach because we are bewildered by the cultures we find there. Our culture causes similar conflict for them. Indeed, the failure of nations and peoples to understand one another's cultures leads to anger, resentment, and acts of war. Lutheran educators, however, need not look any further than their own schools to see the ramifications of cultural confusion.

Kim found it disturbing that Jimmy, the new third-grader in her classroom, simply refused to look at her or any of the other teachers when they spoke to him. "He's being insolent and disrespectful," she reported to Jimmy's parents. The parents were puzzled and upset because they knew how they had taught their children to respect their elders. Unfortunately, Kim failed to realize that in the culture of this immigrant family looking an elder in the eye is considered highly disrespectful.

Frank found himself in conversation with a parent at the annual school picnic. "I really appreciate all the religion you've been teaching Sarah," she offered, "but I'm a little concerned. She likes to pray before she goes to bed now, which is really neat, but she prays that God would help the people from India to know about Jesus and not go to hell. Could you please explain to her that Indian people are good and will go to heaven just like us?"

Bob had watched Samantha grow and learn for eight years in the Lutheran grade school where he served as principal. He knew she was now well into her college years, and so wasn't terribly surprised that he hadn't seen her in worship for some time. He was very surprised, however, to run into her in the airport one day. "So where are you traveling," he asked. When he found out that she had become a Muslim and was headed to a special Islamic conference, he barely knew what to say.

Teachers, students, and parents are challenged to understand the cultural confusion around us and address it from a truly Christian perspective. Our children will face a world of even greater cultural complexity and ambiguity. Previously unimagined choices and decisions—some of them quite upsetting—will present themselves. Fortunately, Christians—and Christian schools in particular—are uniquely positioned to prepare a new generation for the new world we see forming before our very eyes. To do so effectively, however, we must combat our own naiveté and our own fears, choosing to take our cues first from our biblical faith rather than from our American culture. God's Word tells us that he seeks to both embrace and transform all of the world's cultures and peoples. If we are to be his servants in this mission we too must see our thoughts (Romans 12:2) and culture (Ephesians 2:14-18) transformed.

Why All the Confusion?

Culture may be defined as the underlying influence that shapes our thought processes, our perceptions, our activities, and our relationships. Increasingly conflicting and competing influences in American society have produced the cultural confusion we see today. How has this occurred and what handles can we find for grasping its significance?

Ours is an immigrant society. Though we have always been a nation of newcomers, until recently most of those newcomers were of European descent. New immigration laws of the 1960's, however, opened the door more widely to other nationalities from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. War, famine, and economic strife have dislocated millions of people from around the world and forced them into closer proximity to one another. These refugees and immigrants brought with them cultures strikingly different from their European counterparts and they have readily immersed themselves in the larger American society, living next door to us, working beside us, sitting in front of us in the movie theater, and standing next to us at football games. We rub shoulders with people from all over the world.

Ours is a global society. The exponential growth of communica-

tions, technology, and transportation has brought far away places, peoples, and ideas right into our family rooms and boardrooms. Likewise, Western-style capitalism and affluence have placed much of our pop culture and consumerism into the lives of people around the world. Geographical borders are becoming less and less significant in defining and regulating our culture.

Ours is a multireligious society. We are undergoing a massive religious transformation. The signs are hard to miss: large mosques and Buddhist temples are increasingly found in all of our major cities, turbaned Sikhs shop in our malls, and yoga and meditation are taught at the local YMCA. There are now more Muslims in the United States than Episcopalians, Jews, or Presbyterians. We are likely the most religiously diverse society in the world. Protestant Christianity no longer holds the reigns as the dominant religious force in America. We live in a colorful but often confusing collage of religions.

Ours is a postmodern society. Much—perhaps too much—has been said of postmodernism, but it is nonetheless imperative that we recognize the philosophies that guide the thoughts and choices of our younger generations just now coming into significant positions of social influence. Their ways of thinking will increasingly dominate our society. Young Americans are making it clear that they are, above all, pragmatic. “Does it work?” they want to know. If a traditional approach doesn’t bring them the success they seek, they will readily try something else. Spiritually speaking, they aren’t so much looking for “truth” as they are for something that will give them personal peace and fulfillment. Individualism, an ever-growing trait of American thinking, fuels their search and guides their path. They prefer to create their own unique spiritual journey. The inevitable byproduct of such pragmatism and individualism is spiritual and cultural relativism. Truth is not believed to exist in any objective sense. Rather, the “truths” espoused by multiple traditions and religions are regarded as equally valid expressions, from which one might pick and choose.

Ours is an ethnocentric society. In ironic contrast to our cultural relativism and supposed “open mindedness”, we Americans still tend to think that our way is the best way, if not the only way. We remain “centered” or focused on our own cultural assumptions and patterns, judging others as wrong merely for their difference. Ethnocentrism is a natural (though inadequate and destructive) defensive response to a world of cultural confusion. Subcultures within our society also think and behave ethnocentrically, especially when faced with other “competing”

groups. Sadly, we in the church may do the same, impeding our mission to make disciples of all nations, and limiting our own experience of God's grace.

What Can We Do?

Responding to this world of cultural confusion in a Christ-like fashion represents a very personal challenge. Years of upbringing and acculturation have, in a sense, "bound" each of us to the conceptual and behavioral comfort zones of our culture. This is not to say that those aspects of our culture are necessarily in error. They may in most respects be perfectly legitimate—even strongly biblical—but considering the legitimacy of other cultural patterns and discovering how God wants to work in them and in ours requires a willingness to humbly reconsider some of our most deeply held assumptions. Whether facing cultural confusion in our own classrooms or preparing children to respond to that confusing world as faithful Christians, we must approach this task very personally. Acknowledging the excesses and blindness of our own cultural pride may be painful, but repenting of such things is the first step in discovering that God is bigger than we had previously thought. Certainly, this was the Apostle Paul's experience and it equipped him with a unique sensitivity to other cultures, seen especially in his address to the Athenians in Acts 17. God prepared Paul and he continues to prepare and lead his church in accomplishing his mission to all peoples, cultures and languages. With his help and guidance consider the following suggestions.

Discover the bigness of our world! Surveys by National Geographic have revealed how very little Americans know about the rest of the world. As those called to change the world for Christ's sake, Christians should be different. My experience as a visiting missionary tells me we're not. Church members have told me that Africa is a country, that Japanese people are from the Philippines, that most people in India are Muslims, and that all of South America is Christian. Our feeble grasp of geography has much to do with what anthropologists call our "world view". Our worldview governs how we look at our world and our place in it. If our worldview leads us to see ourselves at the center of the universe we will have little interest or concern for other countries and cultures in the world. God's Word encourages us to see ourselves as participants in a bigger world (Psalm 96:3), a world we need to know. Hang a world map in your home and in your classroom. Read the international headlines in the newspaper or tune in to BBC World News. Pick up an informative atlas occasionally, or check out a remarkable book entitled *Material World*

by Menzel (1994). Offer your class descriptions of the lives of children in other countries. Encourage them to locate on a map or globe the countries they hear about in the news. Hang pictures from other countries in your room. Teach them common short phrases in foreign languages.

Become familiar with the nature of cultural differences. The best way to do this is to develop a friendship with someone of another culture. Go out of your way to invite a new neighbor over for dinner, volunteer to tutor someone in English, or befriend an international student. Find some way of meaningfully interacting with someone whose culture is different from yours. As you do, don't assume you know the reason for a particular behavior; ask about what you don't understand. Talk about the person's job, family, or country of origin. Keep your comments positive. Be sensitive to body language and facial expressions. Don't be surprised if the person says or does something outside of your cultural norm. Many routine behaviors are handled differently in other cultures. Consider studying more about these differences from a Christian perspective with one of following very practical authors: Elmer (2002), Lane (2002), or Pocock and Henriques (2002). If you have children in your class of differing cultures encourage them to share stories about their family celebrations, food, games, and aspects of daily life. Read children's stories written in other countries and talk about the differences they note.

Affirm the objective truth and authority of the Scriptures. Given the fluid nature of our society's religious environment it is more important than ever for us to remain focused on the inspired and infallible Word of God as revealed to us in Christ and recorded for us by the prophets and apostles. Increasingly we are finding that church members are mixing otherwise orthodox Christian teaching with ideas from other religions, including reincarnation, astrology, and unbiblical understandings of angels. We must be careful to examine such ideas with God's Word and refute the unscriptural philosophies entertained in our culture. All culture, our own included, is subject to scriptural authority. We acknowledge that both the written Word and the Incarnate Word came to us enveloped in cultural clothing. This, however, does not lessen the truth or power of the message but rather affirms the essential nature of culture. Revealed to us through the languages and peoples of cultures distant in time and place, God's truth is equally valid for all cultures and peoples today. It was God's means for initiating culture (see below) and remains his means for transforming cultures and the people who practice them today. (Hebrews 4:12-13; Isaiah 55:10-11; Acts 17). Teachers will experience this themselves as they regularly read and study God's Word

and examine their own cultural assumptions and practices accordingly. Such a regard for the Word of God must be modeled as well as taught. We must encourage students to study and apply Scripture to all aspects of their lives. Might it be that our teaching of “Religion” unwittingly encourages our students erroneously to segment their lives into “spiritual” and “nonspiritual”? Pulling out the Bibles in English, Science, History, or Social Studies can help them begin to see all of their lives—and all of reality—as subject to the truth of God’s Word.

Know and teach a full biblical worldview. Formally instructed or not, people will adopt a belief system by which they attempt to answer the most basic questions of life. Questions of our origins, the nature of reality, the cause of suffering, and the purpose of life help generate a culture’s “world view”. The Christian teacher needs to know and teach the full worldview presented by the Bible, communicating Christianity as a unique and complete belief system that answers these basic questions. It is not enough to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in isolation from the rest of the biblical account. Similarly, it is not enough to teach the biblical narratives without helping students grasp the larger truths being communicated, and, in later years, helping them compare biblical teachings with those of the world’s religions. As the Apostle Paul understood in Athens (Acts 17), only the full scope of the Christian faith will stand up to the questions all cultures ask. With a solid grounding in the biblical world view, our young people will have no need to spend their college years searching Islam for the nature of God, or investigating Buddhism for the cause of suffering.

Experience the unity and diversity of humankind. The Bible provides a dramatic starting point for our relating to people of other cultures. As descendents of Adam we are all, in a sense, family. Furthermore, we are equally created in God’s image. God gave human beings the mandate to create culture. The animals were to be named, language was to be created, the earth was to be managed, and families were to be formed. These are essential components of all cultures. Likewise, the Bible explains that it was God’s desire to spread humankind across the globe, multiplying their numbers, their languages and their cultures (Gen. 10:32; Acts 17:26). As those chosen by God to make him known among the nations, it is our responsibility and privilege to know and live out these truths. It is part of his plan that we open ourselves to relating to those of other cultures (see Acts 10). Happily, today’s world affords us greater opportunities than ever to do just that, experiencing both the unity and the diversity of humankind. The Christian teacher can begin this process by

enlarging his or her own cultural world. Visit ethnic neighborhoods, attend cultural events or festivals organized by particular nationalities, or eat at a “mom-and-pop” foreign food restaurant (Go during the slower hours so you can talk more with the employees). Perhaps you will want to learn another language or even visit another country. Count on God to give you an enthusiasm for this kind of learning and then spread it to your students. Bring in crafts and recipes from another country. Teach puzzles and games that children of other cultures play. Invite guest speakers who can share from their particular culture. Make the learning personal rather than propositional. Our unity and diversity as human beings is best learned through experience.

Emphasize the uniqueness and necessity of Christ. We must never forget that those without Christ, as ingenious and fascinating as their cultures might be, still live in spiritual darkness. The Apostle Paul found common ground with his hearers in Athens, but he still taught that those without Christ needed to acknowledge their need for a savior (Acts 17:30). A culture or people without Christ will lack the heart of true spiritual understanding. There is no way to God but Christ and God’s Spirit alone can give the enlightenment and faith required (1 Cor. 2:14). Our task is to genuinely care for those of other beliefs, know them the best we can, and share unwaveringly what we know to be true of Christ. Certainly the children in our classrooms need this knowledge of Christ, and a relationship with him, more than anything else they might learn from us.

Celebrate the multicultural nature of the church. Just as we are to discover the “bigness” of our world, so must we see the “bigness” of the church. All too frequently our understanding of the church is limited to our own cultural experience. In fact, the church is worldwide and encompasses a multitude of ethnic groups and nationalities. God plans that it someday will include every culture and language (Rev. 7:9-10)! God invites us to join him in celebrating this reality, and we don’t have to wait until heaven to do so. Visit churches of other cultures. Attend a worship service of a congregation ethnically different from your own. Consider a Chinese church, a congregation of African immigrants, or an inner city congregation markedly different from your own. Cross-cultural worship and fellowship provides for us an opportunity to experience the truth that in Christ there is neither “Jew nor Greek” (Galatians 3:28). If God affords you the opportunity, choose to visit churches or a mission in another country. There is perhaps no other way to experience more effectively the “bigness” of the church and the transcendence of our God.

We are all by nature ethnocentric. We are likely to envision a God who looks like us, speaks our language, and wants worship to be as we do it. We may fail to see the validity and richness of varied cultural expressions of the singular biblical faith. However, when visiting a church outside of our country we meet Christians for whom God speaks another language. Their worship services may be dramatically different (and longer!) from what we are accustomed to. An African church leader once explained the value of such international visits, noting that without such cross-cultural fellowship our own cultural views will blur our understanding of God. Worshipping together helps us discover that “God is bigger than both of our cultures” and affords us the opportunity to know him more fully. The church is multicultural by God’s own design. We must see this for ourselves and help our children know and celebrate this truth. When they think of the church, do they have in mind a group of people just like themselves, or do they see people of all colors, sizes, and ages, speaking their languages and making their music, but all worshipping the same God? Consider a weekend field trip to a church that is culturally different. Use international worship and praise music, artwork, photographs and mission videos to communicate to your children the diverse makeup of God’s people.

Foster a compassion and concern for those of other religions and cultures. God’s great passion is that the whole world would know him and be saved. He “so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” so that by believing in him they might be saved. This passion is central to God’s very being. It is his dream. What of our love, our dreams, our passions? It breaks God’s heart to see people—even whole nations and cultures—without knowledge of his love in Christ. Does this break our hearts? Surely if we, as the church, are to make a difference in this world of cultural confusion, we must share the perspective and desire of our God. Do we see others as “evil” or as “lost”? Immersion in God’s Word is unquestionably the best way to foster in us a genuine compassion and concern for those lost without Christ. The same is true for our students. There are, however, additional means we can employ in our lives and in our classrooms. Read missionary biographies, perhaps starting with Hudson Taylor or William Carey.¹ Assign reading in similar books designed for children or youth. Get on the mailing or email list of a missionary and begin receiving his or her prayer requests. Commit yourself to pray accordingly and share the same with your students. Arrange for your students to correspond with a child of a missionary family. Invite into your class a person who converted to Christianity

from another religion. Consider having your class support an international mission project or a child overseas. Spin your classroom globe, point, and then pray for the country you land on. Learn of an unreached people group and lead your students in learning and praying about that group. Resources for doing this are readily available on line, from LCMS World Mission and other organizations.

Can our efforts as Lutheran educators make a difference in this world of cultural confusion? Will we have an impact on the future direction of our rapidly changing American society? On an even grander scale, can we, from our classrooms, really affect change in this world's ominous path toward cultural conflict? Children and young people well prepared to

interact with other cultures in the love and compassion of Christ will certainly make a difference. Lutheran congregations and schools that model harmonious cross-cultural relationships

Children and young people well prepared to interact with other cultures in the love and compassion of Christ will certainly make a difference.

will make a difference. The global church of Jesus Christ has always made a difference and by God's grace and empowering will continue to do so. God chooses to make a difference. That is his mission. As we are again reminded by the Apostle Paul, "from one [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live." (Acts 17:26) God is sovereign and chooses to direct the course of history and to transform hearts of individuals and the cultures of humankind. How shall he transform us that we might be more effective in his mission to this world? -LEA

References

- Elmer, D. H. (2002). *Cross-cultural connections: Stepping out and fitting in around the world*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Lane, P. (2002). *A beginners guide to crossing cultures: Making friends in a multicultural world*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Menzel, P. (1994). *Material world*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Pocock, M. & J. Henriques. (2002). *Cultural change in your church: Helping your church thrive in a diverse society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Taylor, J. H. (1987). *Hudson Taylor*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers.

Smith, G. (1885). *The life of William Carey, D.D.: Shoemaker and missionary*. London: John Murray.

Rev. Paul K. Gossman, Ph.D. is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Melrose Park, IL

Footnotes

¹ See Smith (1885) and Taylor (1987).

The Relationship Between Fatherless Children and Their Concept of the Fatherhood of God

La Verne Tolbert

We are a nation that excels in economic and military power and medical achievements. Many times, the United States is the first nation to send aid to other countries that are in need and distress. Americans are known to unite during times of tragedy and war. Cities and towns rally around their favorite sport teams, in hopes of winning the next championship. Waving proudly in the air, our Red, White, and Blue reminds of us of our freedom. However, each night as the lights turn off across the nation, over 17 million of our children go to bed without being kissed by a father (Koch, 2000).

The rate of fatherlessness in the United States is nothing short of astounding.

The number of children living with only their mothers in 1960 was 5.1 million. Today the number of children who go to bed at night in a household in which the biological father does not live is pushing 24 million, or almost 40 percent of all children. America passed Sweden in the mid-1980s as the world leader in families headed by single mothers. (Eberly, 1999, p. 6)

According to Eberly (1999), prior to the 1960s, fatherlessness was caused primarily by divorce, separation, or non-marital childbearing. Add to these causes the contemporary lifestyle choices of deciding to be a single parent or becoming impregnated through artificial insemination, and it's easy to see how fatherlessness in America has become the norm.

More than one-third of the nation's 71 million children don't live with their biological fathers and, "40 percent of those children haven't seen their fathers in a year" (Koch, 2000, p.1). Seventeen million children don't live with any father at all (Koch, 2000).

An epidemic of absentee fathers is plaguing our society, and it's no respecter of persons. It has hit homes from east to west, north to south, affecting the wealthiest and the poorest, male and female, as well as

all races and ethnicities. Society has allowed it, and the church hasn't been able to stop it. Children, teens, adults, even the elderly are all crying on the inside because of it. (Robinson, 2004, p. 2)

Over forty million children are in some state of fatherlessness, and its devastating side effects reverberate throughout society. This plague has seeped into our classrooms, parks, daycares, ballet classes, and little league baseball teams. It has even welcomed itself into the church.

It is here that, prayerfully children can find a place to learn “about the Father of the fatherless (Ps. 68:5)” (Williams, 2000, p.1). However, from the view of the child’s heart, is it possible for fatherless children to truly believe in and relate to God as Father while coping with emotional issues such as abandonment and rejection?

If it’s true that having a relationship with an earthly father, who is a *real* daddy, helps us understand the value and importance of having a relationship with our Heavenly Father, then it may be difficult for fatherless children to grasp the compassionate, caring nature of a God who is strong yet available and ever present for us. Does having a relationship with an earthly dad inform our concept of the Fatherhood of God? Are children who are raised without fathers or with emotionally absent dads able to develop intimate personal relationships with Father God?

This article¹ examines these questions beginning with the causes and consequences of fatherlessness. Excerpts and personal interviews with fatherless children and adults underscore the dynamics that this phenomenon has on young and old alike. We conclude with recommendations for Christian educators.

Tripling of Divorce

With the tripling of the divorce rate between 1960 and 1990, divorce has become a major pathway to a fatherless family for one million children each year (Wood, 2001). Many of those who divorce remarry, but “83 percent of marriages that take place within two years of a divorce also end up in a divorce,” (Robinson, 2004, p. 2).

More than 80% of divorces are female initiated, asserts Wood, president of the National Fatherhood Initiative and Gell, founder of the Children’s Legal Foundation (2001). “The single largest reason that fathers do not see their children is a result of female-initiated divorce for no ‘good’ reason”. In a statement before the Ways and

Means Committee, they asserted:

The proportion of divorces initiated by women ranged around 60% for most of the 20th century, and climbed to more than 70% in the late 1960s when no-fault divorce was introduced, so says a just-released study by law professor Margaret Brinig of George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia and Douglas Allen, economist at Vancouver's Simon Fraser University. The researchers undertook one of the largest studies ever (undertaken) on divorce, using 46,000 cases from the four American states that keep statistics on which partner initiates the action. In addition to women filing twice as often, the researchers found, they are more likely to instigate separations and marriage break ups.

In 25% of marriage breakdowns...men have "no clue" there is a problem until the woman tells them they want out.... Women are more likely to file if the divorce rate is high in their area or if their friends and families are doing it. "Where the divorce rate is low, there's a lot of stigma attached they won't leave...."

"The rights of women in society have been pushed to such an extent that they now feel if they're not happy, it's their partner's fault," says marriage researcher Walter Schneider. That perception is heightened by the social conditioning of men to be chivalrous. Men have to be protectors of women and children, so they are reluctant to become involved in an adversarial process against a woman. They're also less likely to seek divorce because that would destroy their self-image as providers and protectors of the family. It would destroy their world; all they've sacrificed for would go down the drain. (Wood & Gell, 2001, p. 4)

Perhaps these women believe the all-too-common myth that families don't need fathers. "We were increasingly told, all families were relative and the one relative children could do without was their father. Put simply, the modern family might need a village, but it no longer needed a dad," (Horn, 1999, p. 131).

Awarding joint custody to both parents may help stem the tide of women initiating divorce, argues Wood. "After analyzing 21 wide-ranging variables, the Brinig-Allen study concludes that the person who anticipates gaining custody of the children is the one most likely to file for divorce," (Wood & Gell, 2001).

If women feel justified in initiating divorce, men feel justified in leaving their families. "By telling men that they are at best superfluous and at worst detrimental to the well-being of children, men could now claim that they were doing their children a favor by leaving them solely in the hands of the mother," (Horn, 1999, p. 134).

This is especially true when society believes the myth that father is viewed as a liability, a hindrance to the overall well being of the family. "In half a century, the concept of fatherhood in the United States has degenerated from 'Father Knows Best' to father is a jerk, a deadbeat, a bigot, an uninvolved, uncommitted absentee father and now finally the ultimate minimalist position as 'sperm father'" (Patton, 1995, p.1).

The myth that children ultimately are resilient—they'll bounce back from the divorce—adds to the soaring divorce rates. Society promises and parents echo that kids will get over the divorce and be just fine, thank you. Some even promote the notion that divorce can be a self-actualizing experience for children. "By 1990, nearly a million children annually were experiencing the 'liberating effects' of divorce" (Horn, 1999, 135).

In their study on the effects of divorce on children, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) determined that 50% reported feeling rejected and abandoned. One-third feared abandonment by the remaining parent. Five years after the divorce, these children were even more unhappy, indicating that children don't "get over it" with the passing of time.

One could almost celebrate the fact that, today the divorce rate is declining. But this is only because fewer people are getting married, hence fewer divorces. The marriage rate has fallen 41% since 1960. Only 55 percent of U.S. adults are married and living together, which is "the lowest figure in history" (McManus, 1999, p. 148). For too many, the commitment of marriage is replaced with the transitory commitment of cohabitation. Others simply decide to become single parents.

The Unwed Father

An average of 3.7 million couples are cohabiting. "Forty percent of those whose unions begin with cohabitation, break up short of marriage. Result? The number of never-married Americans doubled from 1970 to 1994 from 21 million to 44.6 million in 1994 largely due to cohabitation" (McManus, 1999, p. 149). Many of these couples are having babies, even though the father is unwed.

Each year 1.3 million children are born out of wedlock. And illegitimacy increased somewhat in 1996 among whites to 25.7 percent, while decreasing slightly among blacks to 68.8 percent. In fact, by 1994, 40 percent of never-married American women in their thirties have had a child. (McManus, 1999, p. 150)

During the late 60's and early 70's single-parenting increasingly became the norm with the advent of the women's liberation movement. Women's rights ushered in the phenomena of a woman's right to bear and raise children without a husband. The result? As a nation, we are raising children many of whom have no idea what it is to live with their biological dad.

The headline of a national weekly news magazine summarizes the notion of single families. "Who Needs a Husband?" the cover story blared (Edwards, 2000). It affirmed that more women are saying no to marriage and embracing the single life. Despite such stark realities, women do need husbands and children do need fathers (Tolbert, 2002).

The "Unfather"

The contemporary social experiment of test-tube babies exacerbates fatherlessness in ways that are unprecedented and unimaginable. The sperm father is the unfather. He is the father who completes his fatherhood prior to the birth of the child. He is the father of the biological act only (Blankenhorn, 1995).

According to Blankenhorn (1995), the sperm father is the fantasy father for both men and women. For the man, it is fatherhood without obligation; for the woman she becomes the fantasy little girl who is left alone to play with her dolls. For the children, the sperm father becomes someone to imagine.

The sperm father is the marketplace father whose sperm can be sold and bought. His is paternity without responsibility, because he impregnates anonymously and then proceeds with his life as the mother raises the child alone. This unfather represents the extreme result of the myth that dads are superfluous.

On May 22, 2003, Oprah Winfrey featured children of sperm donors on her show. She preceded her interviews with the startling announcement that one million babies have been conceived through artificial insemination.

To a man who had been a sperm donor monthly for the past five years, Oprah posed the question, "Do you know how many children you have? What would you do if these children contacted you when they reached the age of eighteen?" The startled look on this unfather's face revealed

that he hadn't considered the possibilities of his magnanimous gifts until asked by Oprah.

Many of the children from sperm donor-dads are now over the age of eighteen. They are curious and are asking the question, "Where do I 'really' come from?" Katie Whitaker was one such guest on the show, and she explained why she needed to locate her sperm father. As a teenager, Katie began taking drugs and drinking alcohol. Her mother struggled to connect with her, but was unable to reach her. Against her husband's wishes, she told Katie about the artificial insemination. For Katie, many questions were answered, because as a child she never felt connected to her family. With the help of her parents, she started the search for her biological father whom she found and met (Winfrey, 2003).

On July 4, 2003, the *Los Angeles Times* featured a story of a young woman meeting her sperm donor father, Phillip, for the first time. Why did Phillip become a sperm donor? At the time, he thought he would not marry. He had come from a large, loving family, and he liked the idea of helping others to create such a family. Some of Phillip's other sperm children will be coming of age in the next few years, and he is now having trouble grasping what it will be like to also be involved in their lives. It appears that the large loving family he had envisioned for others now includes him in a way that he had not envisioned (Harris, 2002).

It is difficult to anticipate the long-term impact of sperm fathers on their children. One fact is certain. Because it is a lucrative business, the number of sperm children is likely to increase dramatically in the future. And, it is also likely to assume that the consequences for these children may mirror the same effects that other fatherless children face.

Effects of Fatherlessness

While single parenting is commonly accepted among adults, it is difficult for children to cope with the effects of fatherlessness. More than half—59.4% of families with a single mother live near poverty; 48.9% live in poverty; 27.9% live in extreme poverty (Payne, 2003). Economic disadvantage is not always - but often - the breeding ground for drug abuse, gang warfare, and at it's worst extreme, homelessness. Children from fatherless homes are:

- 5 times more likely to commit suicide
- 32 times more likely to run away
- 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders

- 14 times more likely to commit rape
- 9 times more likely to drop out of high school
- 10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances
- 9 times more likely to end up in a state-operated institution
- 20 times more likely to end up in prison (childrensjustice.org)

Nationally, there are 650,000 gangs and 2 million men in prison. A large percentage these men are African Americans (Paschall, Ringwalt & Flewelling, 2003). Sixty percent of all state inmates have children and 36% of those inmates have two or more children (King, 1993).

In a study using a national probability sample of 1,636 young men, it was found that older boys and girls from female headed households were more likely to commit criminal acts than their peers who lived with two parents (Fathers.com). Eighty-five percent of all children who exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes (Centers for Disease Control, 2003).

Delinquency is twice as high when dads are absent (Hart, 2000).

The teenage birth rate has declined, but teenagers are still having babies contributing to the out-of-wedlock birth rates. According to Ellis et al, (2003), of the girls who lived in fatherless homes, 40% had sexual intercourse by age 16. By age 17, 15% had pregnancies that resulted in a live birth or an abortion. Other studies concur, demonstrating that children living in homes where their parents remain married are less likely to become sexually active (Tolbert, 2002).

Mattox (1999) finds that “daughters whose fathers are physically or emotionally absent are much likelier to develop serious problems with other men in their lives” (p. 40). Ellis et al. (2003) agrees that, “father absence was an overriding risk factor for early sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy” in teenage girls and concluded that “conversely, father presence was a major protective factor against early sexual outcomes, even if other risk factors were present” (p. 818).

Fatherlessness leads to a “host of social ills for boys: diminished self-esteem, depression, delinquency, violence, crime, gang membership, academic failure, and difficulties with emotional commitments” (Pollack, 1999, p. 124). Equally important, absent fathers “provide boys with a warped model of parenting—one that teaches them it’s acceptable not to have a father who ‘stays in the picture’” (Pollack, 1999, p. 125).

Boys raised in families that are not intact are more likely to be sexually promiscuous. According to Dobson, only 18% of promiscuous boys

come from intact families. Fifty-seven percent of virgin boys come from intact households (Dobson, 2001).

Sexual dysfunction may also have its roots in fatherlessness. That homosexual orientation emerges from dysfunctional family relations, primarily the relationship with the father, is based upon psychoanalytic theory as espoused by Freud. He argued that human beings were innately bisexual, with potentiality for homosexual, hetero- or bisexuality based on their environment and occurrences in their childhood (Jacobo, 2001). Homosexuality may be related to familial causes such as fatherless families or families with a cold, abusive, or distant father.

Children living in fatherless homes often suffer from poor self-esteem and as a result experience problems in school. In an Oregon study on fatherlessness, children told the researcher that they felt worthless because their fathers were not involved in their lives. They felt that they were undesirable or else their fathers would want to see them (Taylor, 1999).

Rejection, anger, and rage are common among the fatherless. Children with positive father experiences displayed less impulsiveness and more self-control (Pruett, 2000). Fatherlessness is a predictor of crime that is greater than income or race (Foster, 2003). A National Longitudinal Survey of Youth of 6,403 boys ages 14-17 found that boys raised in fatherless homes were twice as likely to be incarcerated. In homes where single mothers remarried, the situation actually worsened. In step families, boys were three times more likely to end up in prison, whereas boys who lived with their single fathers were no more likely to commit crime than were boys from intact families (Gallagher, 1998). Research seems to indicate that fatherless children are more likely to be angry. One student explains:

Since my father and mother were divorced, I had difficulty understanding who I was supposed to follow—my real biological father who was far away or the various boyfriends my mother had, most of poor quality, as I was growing up. Because of these other men, I unfortunately “inherited” their use of vulgarity and anger and displayed it often during my adolescent years. I understand this now, but during the time I was growing up, I viewed it as normal male behavior. It was behavior I believed I needed in order to survive as a strong, competent male.

The absence of a father in the home also has a negative effect on children's intellectual development and subsequent educational pursuits. Researchers report that infants who spend time alone with their fathers develop at higher levels in the area of social behaviors. They

also seem to develop a keen desire to explore and to experiment (Pruett, 2000). Growing up in a mother-only home decreases a child's chances of completing high school by more than 40% for white children and 70% for black children (Foster, 2003).

If children who are fatherless are less likely to explore their world of things seen, then it is quite likely that they will not explore the world of things unseen. How do we pass on the faith to this generation?

The Father God Concept

How do children identify with the concept of the Fatherhood of God? The question is not new. Freud theorized that the notion of God is rooted in what ultimately becomes a deification of the father figure (Rizzuto, 1979). Rizzuto disagrees with much of Freud's theory, stating that it is the powerful image of parents kneeling in worship for example, that ultimately leaves the greatest impression on children. The concept of God is formed by watching mothers and fathers acknowledge, pray to and rely upon an ultimate Being greater than themselves.

In such a picture, parents serve as role models, and role models help shape behavior. Unfortunately, there are millions of fatherless children who will never see their fathers pray.

Stonehouse in *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey* (1998), recounts how Old Testament fathers prayed strapping small leather boxes containing selected verses from the Law to their left hand and forehead. What an example for children! The indelible imprint left by their fathers' example helped form their faith in God. But what happens to a child who doesn't have a father's faith to embrace?

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the well known athiest whose efforts were largely responsible for banning prayer in public schools, was abused by her father and hated him. H. G. Wells, the famous writer and philosopher, grew up with a father who was never home because of his professional career as a cricket player. Wells became an athiest even though his mother referred to God as her Father. Athiesm and abusive or absent fathers may be related (Vitz, 1999).

Before a child even enters his bassinet, parental imprints are being made. According to Erikson, the first developmental stage for infants is one of trust vs. mistrust (Yount, 1996). During this stage, "the kind of care they receive determines their fundamental disposition towards others"; if their needs are met, the infant "develop[s] feelings of contentment and trust in those who care for them";

negative resolutions of mistrust occur when there is “inadequate care, neglect, or abuse,” and “children who are not cared for adequately during the first two years of life develop deep-seated feelings of fear, suspicion, and hurt concerning the world around them,” (Yount, 1996, p. 49).

During this stage, a child's faith is also developing. Fowler (1981) explains that pre-images of God are being formed, and they are comprised of the people and experiences with whom the child interacts. In fact, “the quality of mutuality and the strength of trust, autonomy, hope and courage (or their opposites) developed in this phase underlie (or threaten to undermine) all that comes later in faith development” (Fowler, 1981, p. 121).

The pigments for the colors that are used to paint the dismal picture of the fatherless originate here. Fatherless children may have developed a healthy fruitful relationship with their mother, but the trusting relationship with their father is non-existent. Although Fowler is not reporting on Christian faith development per se, father absence in the development of any faith is a shaky foundation on which to build belief in God.

The education a child receives, whether it be in the home, church, or school, “has a tremendous responsibility for the quality of images and stories we provide as gifts and guides for our children's fertile imaginations” (Fowler, 1981, p. 132). What types of images are being developed in the fatherless child's mind, since his images are rooted from what he sees in adults? Fowler explains that dangers in this stage include “unrestrained images of terror and destructiveness” (p. 134). Fatherless, a child's imagination may lead him to picture God the Father as detached from his life, like an amputated arm.

Fathers are crucial to the spiritual development of their sons and daughters. “Healthy personality development prepares children for openness to God, whereas developmental dysfunction creates barriers to a life of trusting, growing faith,” (Stonehouse, p. 21). Spiritual formation, a process that might parallel ego development, may be crippled when half of one's parent is missing.

Rizzuto (1979) suggests that individuals create their image of God from projected images of primary objects such as parents. Poll and Smith (2003) continue to add that “if such projection occurs with one's conception of God's image, then a similar projection may take place with one's perceived relationship with God and, therefore, one's spiritual identity” (p. 131).

An absent father doesn't provide security for the child, nor can that absent father consistently and appropriately discipline. The fatherless child may come to the conclusion that since survival thus far hasn't included a father, survival in the future does not necessitate God the Father.

Widows and Orphans

"The wounds inflicted by an absent or emotionally distant father can sometimes be subtle, but there's no escaping the fact that our lives have been profoundly affected on multiple levels," writes Robinson in *Longing for Daddy: Healing from the Pain of an Absent or Emotionally Distant Father* (2004).

The first time I cried actual tears for my father was in Dallas, where God isolated me to deal with my daddy issues. I was flabbergasted that tears were falling over a man I had never met. But the more I thought about our non-encounter and non-relationship, the faster the tears fell. I was grieving his overall absence in my life.

The fifth dirge of Lamentations indicates that one becomes an orphan solely through the loss of a father, even if the mother is still present. "We have become orphans and waifs, our mothers are like widows," (Lamentations 5:3). The New American Standard Bible reads, "We have become orphans without a father," (emphasis added). The word orphan means, "to be lonely" and refers to a bereaved person. And bereaved people need to grieve both their tangible and intangible losses. (Robinson, 2004, p. 50, 51)

The scars from being raised without dad leave an indelible mark on the soul. As adults, children raised in fatherless homes struggle in their relationship with God as Father. He is seen as an authoritarian figure, or the transcendent God who seems as distant as a non-custodial dad. Few experience the intimate relationship with their Heavenly Father because the concept of God is based on the tangible relationship with their earthly absent fathers.

I believed God loved everyone except me. When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior at age eleven, I was

so happy Jesus loved me! I wholeheartedly believed it and embraced it. Love was the highlight and focus of salvation for me more than eternal life. However, no one explained and modeled the importance of an intimate relationship with the Lord. Therefore, God and His love became a distant memory...

I passed many years in an aimless circle before I painfully acknowledged the root of my problems. When I was finally ready to move from denial, hurt, and pain to the arms of the Father, I freed God's hands to heal my wounded heart, to repair what was shattered when my father walked out....

My healing process began with a confession to God similar to the introduction at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. I said, "Lord, my name is Monique Marcella Everett, and I am fatherless." God and the angels in heaven resonated in my mind, "Hello, Monique." (Robinson, 2004, p. 4, 5)

This fatherless daughter continues recounting how she longed for daddy and how God became her Father.

I began to equate discipline with love, not abandonment. I realized I could come to my Father for anything. I understood the "No's" of God meant protection, for my Father would not withhold any good thing from me. I felt at liberty to express my anger toward Him and knew he wouldn't "get me back" by punishing and leaving me. During those five years I fell in love with God. By September, 1997, God had become my Father." (Robinson, 2004, p. 5, 6)

Dobson (2000) emphasizes "kids identify their parents—and especially their fathers—with God. That makes us grown-ups uncomfortable, of course because we are aware of our imperfections and shortcomings. Nevertheless, we have been given the awesome responsibility of representing God to our vulnerable little children" (p. 167).

Emotionally Absent Dads

According to Stonehouse (1998), children form their image of God by relating to their parents. "God is the all-powerful, all-knowing parent who tends to take on the characteristics of parents as the child perceives them," (p. 129). Children who spend more time with their fathers and

who have loving relationships with their dads develop a more concrete, confident knowledge of God. The opposite is true when fathers are detached from their children, or emotionally absent. Emotionally absent dads are fathers who only *physically* live at home. One student recounts his difficult Christian formation process as a child of a missionary father who was too busy for his own son.

My personal experience was such that although my father was physically in the home during my formative years, he was emotionally absent much of the time. During the same period, I was physically absent from the home as a result of being sent away to boarding school between the ages of eight and sixteen.

As a result of growing up away from home I developed some negative attitudes. During this period of my life, I would describe myself as being insecure, unmotivated and angry. I was a quiet child, and this was interpreted by my parents as being a "compliant" child. Although I rarely challenged my parent's authority directly, when I got older, I would remain quiet about a situation that I disagreed with and then wait until I returned to boarding school where they could not directly enforce their authority. This changed between the ages of 17 to 19 when I lived at home with them full-time. I began to rebel against their authority openly as I sought to provide my independent ability.

When I was sixteen, I came to realize that my "Christianity" was [only] a lifestyle and not much of a personal relationship. Although I read my Bible almost daily, prayed and spent time in worship and fellowship regularly, I felt at a distance from God. It would be fair to compare my relationship to God with my relationship with my father. He was busy doing the important things of life and although he loved me, and since I wasn't having any problems, was being taken care of and lacked for almost nothing (I never went hungry, naked or without shelter), he would spend his time helping people who were in need (physically and spiritually). Perhaps the best

way I can describe the way I felt about my father was that I was an emotional orphan.

When it came time to make my faith my own after high school, my faith had no depth. God was not there when I “needed” Him because He was off helping people who were more needy, and my primary responsibility was to stay out of trouble as getting in trouble prevented God (and my father) from doing those other important things that needed to be done. This is, of course, why I was sent to boarding school, as it freed my parents up to be busy at God’s work and not consumed with the responsibilities of caring for children on a daily basis. As a result of these incorrect feelings, my spiritual development was hindered and I remained immature in my faith.

For this article, children whose parents work in some capacity in the church were asked to define God. Their answers directly reflected their relationships with their earthly fathers as exemplified in the son of Mrs. W. She explains that her husband never spends time with the family. He works most of the time, and when he is not working he plays golf to relieve stress. When their 9 year-old son was asked, “Who is God? ”, he could only repeat what he heard in Sunday School, “God is good. I don’t know.” To the question, “Who is your dad?”, this same child could only give his father’s name adding, “He comes home when I am asleep. I only play with grandma.”

Another boy, aged 11 also has a father who is emotionally absent, and he answered similarly. “Who is God to me? God is God. God sent Jesus to save us.” To “Who is your dad?” he answered, “My dad is my dad. He works at _____ company. He is very busy.”

In contrast, children who spent time with their father were able to describe God on a more personal level. A boy, aged 10 was able to elaborate, “Who is God to me? God is wonderful, loving, caring, blessing, saving, omnipotent, omniscient, and great. He is wonderful, because He does what is right and He is truthful. He is loving, because He gave his Son to die for us on the cross. He is caring, because He blesses us and wants the best for us. He is great, because He is almighty God. He is eternity, because He is the beginning and the end.” To the question, “Who is your dad?” he answered, “My

father is wonderful, manly, strong, courageous, and a man of God. My father is wonderful, because he always cares about me. My father is manly, because he is very responsible. My father is strong, physically, spiritually, and mentally. My father is courageous, because he works for God. My father is a dude, because he's a homi (always spending time with us). My father is a man of God, because he calls God his Father."

A 12-year old whose father also spends time with him described God as "loving and caring...He is real. He protects me, and He sends angels to guard me. God is Father to me, and I believe in Him that I am his child. I can tell anything I want to Him. When I call on Him, He will always answer me, and I know he is never too busy for me. He loves me very, very much, not only because the Bible says so, but I know it." He describes his dad at home by saying, "My dad loves me very much. He is never too busy for me."

God designed the family as a training ground. He intended that children be taught about life and relationships, including their relationship with God, in the context of their family. Children learn that they are loveable by experiencing the love of their earthly fathers. Much of what children learn as they are growing up is learned through the example of those with whom they spend the most time. "On average, teens say they devote about two hours a week discussing things that are important to them with their mothers, and just one hour a week discussing meaningful matters with their fathers" (Barna, 1995, p. 56).

If a children's relationship with their fathers is unnecessary when they are growing up, why should a relationship with God the Father be pursued if, in their view, God is seen as a reflection of their own father? At best, God may be acknowledged, but an intimate relationship with him may be unthinkable.

Restoring the Faith

Restoring the faith so that children believe and perceive God as Father must begin in the home with fathers as role models. The goal of Christian parents is to foster a home environment where children fall in love with God and obey him. God gives parents a head start in raising their children. "Impressing godly principles upon our children is accomplished through the sacrificial gift of time. Once we're *with* our children, teaching them God's commandments is simple: We talk with them while

we're sitting, walking, lying down, and getting up" (Tolbert, 2002, p. 12).

Adults and children can talk together about God and God's ways at home, as you go here and there, at bedtime, and as you start the day. Whenever something causes you to think about God, talk naturally about God then. These would not be planned lessons but mini conversations about God as child and adult enjoy a flower, a song, or a story about God. Parents can set the stage for natural conversations about God. (Stonehouse, 1998, p. 25)

God wants children to live in homes and a community where the laws of God are not just recited and talked about but lived. Children need to see and experience the faith in action. Then they will ask, "Why do we do this? What does it mean?" Moses did not say, "If your children ask"; he said, "When your children ask..." (Deut. 6:20). Parents are to respond by telling their children their experiences or stories with God. Children need to hear the stories of how God has worked in their own families.

God is found in the family. Most of the time, he is offered by the parents to the child; he is found in everyday conversation, art, architecture, and social events. He is presented as invisible but nonetheless real. Finally, most children are officially introduced to the "house of God," a place where God supposedly "dwells" one way or another. That house is governed by rules very different from any others; the child is introduced to ritual, to the official behavior he is expected to exhibit there, and to other events in which the encounter with God is socially organized and prearranged. (Rizutto, 1979, p. 8)

When fathers are not in the home, the church must assume the responsibility of doing as Christ commands. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27 KJV). The church, with God's help, is capable of reaching children abandoned by their fathers. A student recounts how the church helped in his Christian formation.

After I lost my father [my parents divorced when I was 2 and then my dad died when I was 9 years old; my mom died soon afterwards]...I was continually told about the loving and gracious Father God and how he would work in my life.... How could a Father I have never seen nor heard be a Father that could love me if no father on earth was able to do that job well?

God was a God of discipline. I was being punished, for whatever reason, and I felt that he had no desire for a personal relationship with me. The God that I experienced was a rigid, harsh God who wanted me to say the right things, go to church every Sunday and be nice to others. He was not a God who cared personally for me.

Most of the time, they were pleasant, easy-going Christians who told me of this God of love and I thought they had no idea of who God really was. Those Christians who made the most impact on me were not the ones telling me of God's love and forcing God's goodness on me through Bible verses and other inspirational writings. It became the families that cared for me and encouraged me as one of their own sons that changed my vision of God. Even though I was not their biological son, they went to great lengths showing me what love was.

Fatherlessness can be addressed within the safe community of the church or Christian school. Teachers might make special efforts to address issues from the viewpoint of fatherless children. Churches might include small groups that are geared to confronting the pain and loss that adults continue to experience as a result of their fatherless upbringing.

Small group settings are ideal places to talk about and receive the balm of God's grace for distorted father images and painful childhood experiences. And, teaching people to pray with honesty ushers in a relationship where intimacy can be experienced.

During my healing process, I was angry with my complete stranger-father for leaving me and outraged at the Father for allowing him to leave. I was so mad I thought I would lose control. I had never experienced such anger toward God. I remember my prayers to the Father during that season of my life. I would get on my knees once a day before bedtime, close my eyes, clasp my hands, and say, "Father,

I'm not talking to you. Amen." (Amen means "it is so," and that was so!) This lasted four days, after which I longed for Daddy, and there was an outpouring of words and tears. (Robinson, 2004, p. 69)

Christian educators might focus on the spiritual disciplines to help learners erase the old tapes that say, "I'm worthless", and learn truths that replace the deficient, imperfect vision that absent fathers inadvertently project onto Father God. Dallas Willard, in a lecture at Haggard School of Theology on October 29, 2003, stated, "It is by the contents of our mind that our will, our feelings, our body and our relations to others are directed."

Then, we might ask, if children grow up without a father present in the home, are they doomed to have a warped view of God as Father? "Spiritual disciplines such as solitude, silence, and memorization of scripture are designed to help us with the transformation of our mind from perverted" (in the case of this article, our previous view of fatherhood) "to correct thoughts" (new ways of thinking about fatherhood). Noting Philippians 2:5, which instructs us to have the attitude of Jesus Christ, Willard stressed that we are to put in our minds what Jesus had in his mind. We have to make an effort to do this, and we are given the promise that "God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants" (Philippians 2:13, LIV).

The church might also focus on developing meaningful ministries to fathers including non-custodial dads. Bible study groups and prayer groups could be utilized to reach fathers who are not actively involved with their children or who are struggling with the demands of fatherhood. The non-custodial father could find emotional support, learn skills to tackle the obstacles of being an involved father, and learn why being spiritually focused could develop him into a better father who has a positive impact upon his children. In this way, the spiritual community can positively impact the immediate and long-term effects of divorce.

Messages and ministry to the family—both husband and wife—are essential in promoting a biblical view of marriage. For wives and mothers, female-only ministry settings may be beneficial in addressing the day-to-day concerns and frustrations that some women face. Given practical keys from scripture, more wives may be encouraged to remain married so that we realize fewer and fewer female-initiated divorces. Ministry to single parents is key as well, especially if addressed within the context of parenting seminars. Providing assistance for single moms and their children may lighten the burden they experience without a husband/father present in the home.

The Church as Community

Catherine Stonehouse (1998) emphasizes that our world is not a safe place and the church “has a greater potential than any other institution for providing the community desperately needed by persons of all ages to provide support and resources for life’s journey” (p. 196). Within this “family,” mothers, fathers, and children can experience safety and comfort in spite of their distress.

The good news is that God did not plan for children to live in isolation, apart from the faith community of the church. It is the responsibility of others in the church to reinforce parental teaching. “God never intended two persons to bear the load of raising their children alone,” (Stonehouse, 1998, p. 26).

And he certainly never intended *one* person—the mother—to bear the load alone. The church can provide mature adult men to serve as mentors to fatherless youth. In the African American community, for example, a yearlong Rites of Passage program tailored after the African model assists young men without fathers in manhood development. As the mentor works with the youth, he in turn helps re-form the view of father. In youth ministries, teenagers need to see husbands and wives working together, modeling what it means to be family.

Churches can also provide a safe haven for children by being an extended family for those who live in the neighborhood and by providing a place for them to gather. Community healer, Leon Watkins calls this process, “re-parenting” and affirms that all people have needs “for identity, a sense of belonging, a place where they will be accepted and respected and where it is possible for them to be acknowledged for their accomplishments” (Woodson, 2001, p. 269).

Crenshaw Christian Center in Los Angeles, where Frederick K. C. Price is the pastor, has a special place specifically designed for teenagers in the community. On Friday nights, kids from the community are welcome to play basketball and “hang out” in the Billy Blanks Youth Activity Center—a \$5 million, 28,000 square-foot state-of-the-art gymnasium. The center was designed to meet the needs of the church’s high school and youth department as well as youth who live in the community, providing a place to get away from gangs and stay off the streets.

In such surroundings, youth can learn what it means to belong in a family. They can watch mentors who are living out the example of true fatherhood and find in these role models someone who is giving them the guidance, love and correction that they are not receiving from their

biological father. In the process, these children are learning how to be good fathers (Woodson, 2001).

To restore the concept of a complete family, educators might intentionally create ministries with intergenerational communities, such as a Titus 2 Sisters group where the older women teach the younger women (Tolbert, 2000). By planning intergenerational activities into the life of the church, the spiritual family truly becomes the extended family that is so desperately needed for fatherless homes.

Conclusion

Christian educators have limited access to teach and reshape the minds of impressionable children. For those not working within a school setting, there is approximately 2 hours a week on Sunday. Even those who teach children in Christian schools realize their limitations if the home is not in concert with biblical teachings.

This is simply not enough time. It takes the family—both a mom and a dad—plus the community of believersÖtogether. It takes Mom...and Dad...-LEA

References

- Barna, G. (1995). *Generation next: What you need to know about today's youth*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Blankenhorn, D. (1995). *Fatherless America: Confronting our most urgent social problem*. NY: Harper Collins.
- Centers for Disease Control. <http://www.massey.ac.nz/okbirks//gender/econ/nodad.htm>
- Children's Justice. <http://www.childrensjustice.org/fatherlessness2.htm>
- Dobson, J. (2000). Complete marriage and family home reference guide. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Dobson, J. (2001). *Bringing up boys*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
- Edwards, T. M. (August 28, 2000). Why marry when you can stay single? *Time*, 156(9), 46-55.
- Ellis, B. J., J. E. Bates, K. A. Dodge, D. M. Fergusson, L. J. Horwood, G. S. Petit, & L. Woodward. (2003). Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy? [Electronic Version] *Child Development*, 74(3), 801-821.
- Fathers.com. <http://www.fathers.com/research/consequences.html>

- Foster, V. (2003, July 22). Fatherlessness key to social ills. *Oakland Tribune* (Op Ed) p. 1
- Fowler, J.W. (1981). *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Gallagher, M. (1998, December 1). Fatherless boys grow up into dangerous men. *The Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), p. 1.
- Harris, S. D. (2003, Jul 4). Style & cultures: Runs in the family—A girl meets her dad, who was a sperm donor years ago. [Electronic version] *Los Angeles Times*, p. E1. Retrieved November 2, 2003, from Proquest database.
- Hart, C. H. (August, 2000). Parents do matter: Combating the myth that parents don't matter. *Marriage and Families*, 2-8.
- Horn, W. F. (1999). The rise of an American fatherhood movement. In D. E. Eberly (Ed.), *The faith factor in fatherhood* (pp. 131-143). Boston Way, MD: Lexington.
- King, A. E. (1993). The impact of incarceration on African American families. *Families in Society*, 16(4), 145-153.
- Klinger, R. (1998). What can be done about absentee fathers? *USA Today*, 127(2638), 30-32.
- Koch, K. (2000, June 2). Fatherhood movement. *The CQ Researcher*, 475-494. Retrieved September 19, 2003, from <http://library.cqpress.com.cqr.resources.apu.edu/cqresearcher>
- Mattox, W.R. (Sept./Oct. 1999). Daughters need fathers too. [Electronic Version] *The American Enterprise*, 10(5), 1-3.
- McManus, M. J. (1999). The role of marriage in strengthening fatherhood. In D. E. Eberly (Ed.), *The faith factor in fatherhood* (pp. 145-178). Boston Way, MD: Lexington.
- Paschall, M. J., C. L. Ringwalt, & R. L. Flewelling. (2003). Effects of parenting, father absence, and affiliation with delinquent peers on delinquent behavior among African-American male adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescents*, 38(149), 15-33.
- Payne, R. K. (Revised 2003). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.
- Patton, J. H. (1995, April). Bring back daddy. *The World Ahead*. www.giveshare.org/family/daddy.html

- Poll, J. & B. Smith. (2003). The spiritual self: Toward a conceptualization of spiritual identity development. [Electronic Version] *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 31(2), 129-142.
- Pollack, W. (1999). *Real boys: Rescuing our boys from the myths of boyhood*. NY: Henry Holt.
- Pruett, K. D. (2000). *Fatherneed: Why father care is as essential as mother care for your child*. NY: The Free Press
- Rizzuto, A. M. (1979). *The birth of the living God: A psychoanalytic study*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P.
- Robinson, M. (2004). *Longing for daddy: Healing from the pain of an absent or emotionally distant father*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press.
- Stonehouse, C. (1998). *Joining children on the spiritual journey: Nurturing a life of faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Taylor, K. (1999, September 2). Study links absentee fathers, troubled kids: An Oregon group finds that increased fatherlessness in the state adds to juvenile crime and other problems. *The Oregonian*. (Sunrise Edition), p. C05.
- Tolbert, L. (2000). *Teaching like Jesus: A practical guide to Christian education in your church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Tolbert, L. (2002). *Keeping your kids sexually pure: A how-to guide for parents, pastors, youth workers, and teachers*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Vitz, P. C. (1999). *Faith of the fatherless*. Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing.
- Wallerstein, J., & J. Kelly. (1980). *Surviving the breakup: How children and parents cope with Divorce*. NY: Basic Books (as cited in Thompson & Rudolph, 2000)
- Willard, D. (1998). *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our hidden life in God*. NY: Harper Collins.
- Williams, G.R. (n.d.). Abba, father. Retrieved October 29, 2003 from <http://www.fathers.com/urban/artf02articles.htm>
- Winfrey, Oprah. (2003, May 22). Secrets of sperm donation. *Transcript of the Oprah Winfrey Show*. Livingston, NJ: Burrelle's Information Services.

Wood, B, & J. Gell. (June 28, 2001). Effects of fatherlessness on children—Social consequences. Statement to the Ways and Means Committee, House of Representatives. http://ancpr.com/affects_of_fatherlessness_on_chi.htm

Woodson, Sr., R. L. (2001). *Breaking the cycle of family dissolution*. The World and I, 16(6), 268-281.

Yount, W. (1996). *Created to Learn: A Christian's teacher's introduction to educational psychology*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman.

Dr. La Verne Tolbert is an adjunct professor at Haggard School of Theology, Azusa Pacific University and Director of Christian Education at Crenshaw Christian Center in Los Angeles, CA where Frederick K. C. Price, D.D. is Founder-Pastor. She is the author of Keeping Your Kids Sexually Pure: A How-To Guide for Parents, Pastors, Youth Workers and Teachers (Zondervan, 2002), and Teaching Like Jesus: A Practical Guide to Christian Education in Your Church (Zondervan, 2000).

Footnotes

¹ Editors Note: This article was prepared with the assistance of students of Dr. Tolbert who researched the topic of fatherlessness as an assignment in the completion of a Christian Formation course at Haggard Graduate School of Theology, Azusa Pacific University. She wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to Mark Bargaehr, Kneeland Brown, Renita Butler, Robert Keller, Mark Kim, Dawn Longnecker, Tim McCabe, Micah Royal, Patricia Shaw, Estee Song, Brian Walton, and Caroline Vandembree.

Ministering to Un-churched, Urban, At-Risk Children

Gary C. Newton

The purpose of this research was to identify the components of effective programs targeted to un-churched, at-risk children, ages 8-12, from urban contexts. The burden for this project came from my burden as a pastor and community member to minister to the needs of un-churched children and their families. Throughout my ministry I have had a burden for children outside the influence of the church. Over the past 33 years I have been involved in several different types of programs and ministries to un-churched children within a variety of social contexts. Presently I am directing a ministry to about 85 primarily un-churched, at-risk children in a small town, urban setting. My hypothesis is that one of the best ways to begin an outreach ministry to a people-group of another culture is through the children. The question that naturally arises is, "What are the components of an effective ministry to such children that eventually result in their long-term spiritual growth and development and the establishment of stable families, churches and communities?" If we could identify such components of effective ministry to children, it would help us to become more purposeful in designing ministries that would affect long-term change in individuals, families and communities.

Design of the Research

Leaders were interviewed from 15 programs ministering to urban, at-risk children ages 8-12 within the United States and Canada. Key pastors and leaders within cities identified the target programs across the United States and Canada. These pastors and leaders were asked to name the most effective children's outreach ministries in each city that seem to have produced the most fruit in terms of changed lives, families and communities.

The main leader from each organization was interviewed by either telephone or questionnaire, by students in a class that I taught at Huntington College entitled "Children and Family Ministry." After significant reading and an orientation on indicators of effectiveness in children's ministry, the class developed the questionnaire used in the interviews. Four major components of successful ministry with

at-risk children were identified from the students' library research, based primarily on readings from Strommen and Hardel (2000), Kilbourn (1996), Stonehouse (1989), Joy (2000), Minuchin, Colapinto and Minuchin (1998), Craig (2002), and Payne, DeVol and Smith (2001). The four components of successful ministry with at-risk children identified in the library research were:

1. Working with parents and families
2. Developing closer relationships between leaders and kids
3. Motivating kids to achieve challenging standards
4. Getting kids assimilated into local churches

These four components provided the structure for some of the major questions in the interviews. Data from the interviews was recorded and analyzed. For the purposes of this article, the following questions will be addressed:

1. How do the goals identified by the ministry leaders compare to the four components of effective ministry identified in research literature?
2. What are the most common ministry approaches identified by the ministry leaders?
3. What are some of the specific ministry approaches related to each of the four components of effective ministry?

Value of This Research

This research will provide valuable insights to professors and practitioners of children's ministries to help them to develop more effective strategies to help at-risk, urban children, their families and communities.

Various Ministry Leaders Interviewed

Leaders from fifteen different types of ministries to at-risk, urban children were interviewed by either phone, in person or by e-mail. This section of this article will include the name and location of the ministries involved in the research, the leaders interviewed and a brief description of their ministry focus.

1. Brothas & Sistas United

Eve Stuglin is the leader for this ministry in Chicago, Illinois.

The purpose of this ministry is to develop long-term relationships with kids, to show them Christ, to create in them a desire to use their gifts for God and to graduate from high school. The ministry involves a variety of community-oriented programs including after school mentoring, family support programs and emergency assistance programs. The ministry involves eight workers and fifty to sixty children.

2. Freedom Christian Bible Fellowship

Judy Landis is the leader of this ministry in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The stated purpose of this ministry is to minister to the needs of urban communities by bridging the gap between churches and urban communities. The ministry involves a team approach including door to door visitation, an annual prayer fellowship, networking with community leaders, community celebrations, visiting mission teams, VBS camp and clothing and food distribution. The ministry involves nine workers and eighty children.

3. Good News Gang

Corri Kinniebrew is the leader for this Saturday morning community outreach/ bus ministry in Detroit, Michigan. The stated purpose for this ministry is to get kids from rough backgrounds off the streets and to teach them to know Christ. The ministry focuses around a large Saturday morning program in which children are picked up in buses and followed up by church volunteers. Children are encouraged to attend church youth programs at other times during the week. The ministry involves fifteen workers and five hundred children.

4. In His Arms Ministry

Rachel Cox directs this club program to homeless children in Honokaa Lane, Hawaii. The stated purpose of the ministry is to share Jesus' love with children by meeting their physical and psychological needs for love and acceptance. The ministry focuses around a club program including scripture memory, prayer, Bible stories, worship, activities, snacks, crafts and attendance incentives. Two leaders are involved with up to 25 children in attendance.

5. In His Arms Ministry

Kim Burr Turnbull directs this ministry to homeless children in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The stated purpose of this ministry is to show love to homeless children and to draw them into the body of Christ. The ministry focuses around a club ministry involving Bible study, prayer, scripture memory, singing, athletic and crafts. This is a large ministry involving an undisclosed number of leaders and four hundred and fifty children.

6. Inner City Missions

Frank Vega directs this ministry in urban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The stated purpose of this ministry is to respond to the needs of the “unreachable,” prostitutes, homeless, drug addicts and at-risk kids, and to help them to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society. The ministry focuses around a club program involving tutoring and mentoring plus an innovative “Sidewalk Sunday School.” This ministry involves nine workers and one hundred to one hundred and fifty children.

7. Jesus People USA/Brothers and Sisters United

Cheryl Terwall directs this ministry in Chicago Illinois. The stated purpose of this ministry is to help needy kids develop a relationship with God, learn life skills and build a vision for the future. This ministry includes a variety of community-focused programs including an after-school drop-in center, tutoring, mentoring, special projects and trips to the theater and professional hockey games. The ministry involves thirty-six leaders and thirty children.

8. Kidworks

Ava Steaffens directs this ministry in Santa Anna, California. The purpose of this ministry is to provide a safe haven for kids in rough neighborhoods to do homework, learn computer skills and be introduced to the love of Christ. This ministry focuses on a community center with a variety programs including homework clubs, computer training, school-readiness training, parent raining, community celebrations, neighborhood clean-ups, youth ministry follow-up and camps. There are sixteen workers and ninety children involved in this ministry.

9. Mountain View

Fay Niemann and Eileen Starr direct this Spring Break Day Camp in Anchorage, Alaska. The purpose of this ministry is to provide a safe, enjoyable, character-building program for un-churched children during Spring Break. The camp involves a weeklong, all-day program in the public school built around an energizing, character-development with recreation, crafts, music and drama. There are one hundred and thirty workers and one hundred children involved in the program.

10. Sparroways Kids Ministry

Ruth Heise directs this ministry in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The purpose of the ministry is to share Christ with kids. The ministry centers on a weekly club, mentoring and summer camp. Eight workers and twenty-five to thirty children are involved.

11. Urban Promise Ministries

Bill Hall directs this ministry in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The purpose of the ministry is to help community people to come to know Christ through long-term relationships established through programs involving family support, after school tutoring for kids and mentoring. This multidimensional community involves tutoring, mentoring, school system volunteers, Bible studies, family support, street leader training, visitation and partnerships with local churches. The ministry involves eighty-five workers and three hundred children.

12. Urban Promise Ministries

Desiree Guyton directs this ministry in Camden, New Jersey. The purpose of this ministry is to equip children, teens and young adults with the skills needed for spiritual growth, academic achievement, living and Christian leadership. This ministry is built around an after school program offering mentoring, summer camp, job training and leadership development. Fifty workers and seventy-five children are involved in this ministry.

13. World Impact

Tim Goddu directs this ministry in Los Angeles, California. The purpose of the ministry is to evangelize, equip and empower urban people through church planting. The ministry is built

around two Christian schools, clubs and a church plant. Other components of the ministry include tutoring, mentoring, sports, Bible clubs, entrepreneurial training, leadership training, music, family outreach and workers who live in the community. One hundred and twenty workers and two hundred children are involved in this ministry.

14. **World Impact**

Fred Clark directs this ministry in Newark, New Jersey. The purpose of this ministry is to plant churches among the urban poor through church planting, education and community development. The ministry is built around a Christian grade school and a church plant. Other aspects of the program include tutoring, mentoring, community development, special events, required teacher/parent conferences, home visits and Bible clubs. There are fifty-six workers and one hundred and thirty children involved in this ministry.

15. **World Impact**

Bob Engel directs this ministry in Fresno, California. The purpose of this ministry is to plant churches led by the indigenous people among the un-churched, urban poor. The ministry is built around clubs, community programs and a church plant. Other significant components of the program are workers who live in the community, whole family focus, camps and community outreach. There are thirty-eight workers and seventy-five to one hundred children involved in the ministry.

Goals Identified by the Various Ministries

The goals identified by the various ministries were categorized and put in rank order related to the frequency that they were identified.

Goals	Frequency
1. Evangelism	12
2. Support in Life Skills	10
3. Build Relationships	7
4. Meet Physical Needs	5
5. Academic Improvement	5
6. Impact the Community	4

7. Establish an Indigenous Church	4
8. Spiritual Growth	3
9. Build Leaders	2

While evangelism emerged as the most prominent goal, it was always linked with other goals relating to the life needs of the people in the community. Giving the children support in developing life skills was identified as being almost as important as evangelism. The other goals identified show the importance of developing a strategy of ministry that meets the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of at-risk children.

In comparing the goals identified by the ministry leaders with the four components of effective ministry with at-risk children identified from the various readings, there were some interesting observations.

Components of Effective Ministry With At-Risk Children Identified From the Readings

1. Working with parents and families
2. Developing closer relationships between leaders and kids
3. Motivating kids to achieve challenging standards
4. Getting kids assimilated into local churches

The only goal above that was not directly mentioned by the ministry leaders as primary was - "Working with parents and families." While most ministries identified specific things they were doing to work with families, it was not a major goal identified by any of the ministry leaders. One of the reasons for this could be that several of the ministries worked primarily with homeless children. Working with the parents and families of at-risk children will always be one of the greatest challenges because of the dysfunctional nature of many of the families of the urban poor.

"Developing closer relationships between leaders and kids" was mentioned as a major goal by almost half of the ministry leaders. The ministry component of "motivating kids to achieve challenging standards," seems to relate most directly to the following goals identified by the ministry leaders: evangelize, give support in life skills, academic success, spiritual growth, and building leaders. While most ministries identified specific ways they were trying to encourage kids to go to church, four of the fifteen ministries specifically mentioned "establishing an indigenous church" for at-risk kids as a major goal.

Ministry Approaches Most Frequently Identified by Leaders (Rank order)

1. Structured club program
2. Mentoring
3. Tutoring
4. After school drop-in center
5. Working with families
6. Church planting
7. Job training
8. Visiting children in their homes
9. Community celebrations
10. Camping
11. Living in the community
12. Providing emergency assistance

It is interesting that most of the specific approaches to ministry identified by ministry leaders could be categorized under one or more of the four components of effective ministry identified from the library research:

1. Working with parents and families (5, 8)
2. Developing closer relationships (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11)
3. Motivating kids to achieve challenging standards (1, 2, 3, 4, 7)
4. Getting kids assimilated into local churches (6, 11)

Ministry approaches that encourage closer relationships between leaders and kids are mentioned the most often. This seems to indicate that building relationships between leaders and kids is of primary importance in working with at-risk kids.

Specific Approaches to ministry to At-Risk, Urban Children as Related to the Four Components of Effective Ministry

The purpose of this research project is to identify the components of effective ministry to at-risk, urban children that eventually result in their long-term spiritual growth and development and the establishment of stable families, churches and communities. While the general components of effective ministry were identified by the literature review, the specifics of how each of these components could be worked out within various contexts were yet to be discovered. In the interviews with each ministry leader, they were asked to identify and explain the specific approaches and methods they used to apply each of the four components of effective ministry.

The various approaches and methods identified under each of the four components represent the most significant findings identified in this research project.

Ministry Approaches and Methods Used With At-Risk Kids by Component of Effective Ministry

Component #1: Working With parents and Families

Ministry leaders identified the following ministry approaches in response to the question: “In what ways do you work with the parents and families of your kids?” There is no significance to the order of the responses.

1. Visits in the home with kids and parents
2. Meeting the physical needs of families: food, shelter, clothes and transportation
3. Special programs for parents: moms day out, parent workshops, neighborhood parent organizations
4. Special events for families: Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving or Graduation
5. Family camps and retreats
6. Contacts with parents when picking up and dropping off kids
7. Being an advocate for parents with government agencies
8. Inviting parents to church with kids
9. Helping parents to set goals with their kids
10. Getting parents to volunteer in the kids’ programs and events

Component #2: Developing Closer Relationships Between Leaders and Kids

Ministry leaders identified the following ministry approaches in response to the question: “What opportunities do you provide for building relationships between leaders and kids?” The responses are not listed in any particular order.

1. Informal close contact with kids both inside and outside ministry events: hugs, compliments, sitting together, playing together, working together and home or community visits
2. One on one mentoring, buddies, guardians
3. Small group interaction
4. Tutoring, helping with homework
5. Living in the community where the children live
6. Special events, retreats, clubs, sports, projects, bible studies
7. Drop-in center, weekly club program with opportunities for building relationships

Component #3: Motivating Kids to Achieve Challenging Standards

The leaders of each of the ministries were asked the following questions related to this ministry component:

1. What are some of the expectations you have for your kids?
2. What are the ways you use to motivate the kids to meet those expectations?

What Ministry Leaders Identified as Their Expectations of Kids (Listed in rank order.)

1. Proper behavior, respect for self and others, following rules, good attitude, Christian character
2. Set personal goals and work towards them
3. Academic achievement: make progress, go on to high school or college, do your best, complete homework, learn computer skills
4. Salvation and spiritual growth, memorize scripture
5. Skills relating to: living, work, reading, relationships, conflict resolution
6. Lower their risk level in problem areas: drugs, sex, drinking, gangs, violence
7. Minimal expectations: just to show up at events, do your best, cooperate
8. Break dysfunctional family patterns
9. Become a community change-agent for good

It seemed that having high expectations for urban, at-risk kids attracted rather than turned away children. While ministries just beginning tended to have low expectations for their kids, the ministries that were more established had high standards.

What Ministry Leaders Identified as the Most Effective Ways to Help the Kids to Accomplish Their Expectations (Not listed in any order)

1. Prayer, biblical teaching, music, drama
2. Getting kids to set their own goals
3. Intangible rewards: encouragement, hugs, close relationships, accountability, affirmation, challenge
4. Tangible rewards: prizes, candy, certificates
5. Discipline, boundaries and communicating disapproval when expectations are not met
6. Incentive programs and projects

The responses to this question seem to indicate that a wide variety of means are used to encourage children to accomplish goals and expectations.

Component #4: Getting Kids Assimilated Into Local Churches

Leaders in each of the ministries responded to these two questions related to this component of ministry:

1. What strategies did you use to get your kids involved with local churches?
2. How effective have your strategies been in getting your kids to regularly attend church?

What Ministry Leaders Identify as the Way They Use to Get Kids Assimilated Into Local Churches (Listed in rank order)

1. Encourage and invite
2. Encourage adult leaders to take kids to church with them, introduce them slowly to the church people
3. Provide transportation for kids to attend churches
4. Bring the churches to the community through bible studies, celebrations, drama, entertainment and other outreach events
5. Start indigenous churches for kids and their parents in their community; live in the community where you minister
6. Teach churches in the urban communities to reach out and assimilate at-risk kids and their families into the church.

Several ministry leaders stated that their primary goal was not to get kids into churches, but rather to establish trust with people first. Other leaders expressed a frustration that most churches are not ready or equipped to minister to at-risk kids and their families. Most of the ministries found that this component of their ministry was not as effective as it could be.

Identifying What Ministry Leaders State are the Most Effective Aspects of Their Programs

The ministry leaders were asked the following question to identify that they thought to be the most effective aspects of their programs: "In conclusion, what do you think is the most important aspect of your program that makes your ministry to at-risk kids so successful?"

What Ministry Leaders State as the Most effective Aspects of Their Programs (Listed in rank order with the number of times identified in brackets)

1. Quality relationships (11)
2. Leadership development (5)
3. Holistic ministry (3)
4. Attractive program (3)
5. Leaders live in kids' community (3)
6. Networking with other community agencies (2)
7. Community development (2)
8. Involve very needy kids (2)
9. Support families (2)
10. Education (2)
11. Visitation (1)
12. Church planting
13. Curriculum
14. Large events
15. Tutoring
16. Emergency assistance to families

It is clear that building relationships with at-risk kids is identified as the most effective aspect of most ministries.

Identifying What Ministry Leaders Say are the Weakest Aspects of Their Ministries

In order to identify what ministry leaders considered to be the weakest areas of their ministries, they were asked the following two questions:

1. What are the weakest areas of your programs?
2. Why would say that these areas are weak?

What ministry leaders Identify as the Weakest Areas of Their Ministries (Items are listed in rank order with the number of responses in brackets)

1. Lack of workers (6)
2. Lack of money (2)
3. Negative attitudes towards the poor (2)
4. Behavior problems (2)
5. Difficulty assimilating kids into churches (2)
6. Inadequate facilities (1)
7. Tracking kids progress (1)

It is significant that personnel and financial resources are identified as the weakest areas of their ministries.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research project was to identify the components of an effective ministry to un-churched, urban, at-risk children. The components identified through the library research were reinforced in the specific approaches to ministry identified by the various ministry leaders.

Component #1: Working with parents and families

While some ministry leaders expressed frustration in ministering to the families of at-risk kids, most expressed a deep desire to reach out to parents and families of their children. The most effective strategies used to relate to families included home visits, helping with practical needs, special programs for moms and inviting families to their children's programs. Working with families is still one of the greatest challenges we face in working with at-risk kids.

Component #2 Developing closer relationships between leaders and kids

Ministry leaders indicate that this component is one of their highest priorities and most effective aspects of their program. Relationships are encouraged through a wide variety of informal contacts with kids in clubs, homes and various activities. Tutoring, mentoring and small groups are commonly used in ministries with at-risk kids. Evidence of the strength of relational ministry is seen in the low ratio between leader and child in most of the more established ministries. Many ministries actually encourage their workers to live in the same communities as their kids. The structure of many of the club programs encourages close relationships between leaders and children. Yet one of the greatest needs identified by the ministry leaders is for more committed, regular volunteers to build lasting relationships with kids. Such relationships are imperative in light of the dysfunctional nature of many of the kid's homes.

Component #3 Motivating kids to achieve challenging standards.

Clear standards do not seem to deter attendance at most established ministries to at-risk kids. In fact, some of the oldest, most effective ministries have exceptionally high standards. On the other hand, some ministries working with homeless children and severely at-risk children

choose to begin with very few expectations. Their approach seems to be one of establishing love and trust first.

Typical standards that are upheld in many ministries relate to appropriate behavior, language, following rules and character expectations. Other ministries encourage kids to higher academic, spiritual, moral, athletic and social goals. Some of the most effective ways that leaders encourage the achievement of higher goals are through interactive teaching methodology, incentives and firm discipline, encouraging personal goals setting and constantly affirming kids.

Component #4 Getting kids assimilated into churches.

While most ministries indicate that they want to get their kids into churches, they don't seem to be very effective at making it happen. There seem to be several reasons for this. Inner-city churches are often unhealthy or in decline. People from established churches are often fearful of rough kids in their buildings. Or, church people may not have either the skill or desire to reach out to street kids. Whatever the reasons, this remains one of the greatest challenges for urban children's workers.

Some of the ways identified to help to get kids established in churches were inviting them to go with their leaders, bringing the church people to the kids, providing transportation to church and training church people to minister to the kids and their families. One rather creative ministry was the idea of a "Sidewalk Sunday School," in which the church people held their classes on the sidewalks in the community. One of the most aggressive strategies to assimilate kids into the church is to plant indigenous churches in the communities where the kids and their families live. While this option will take the most time and resources, it seems to promise the greatest results.

While this initial research includes only a small sample of ministries focusing on un-churched, at-risk children in urban communities, it gives us a glimpse of hope. It paints us a better picture of the strategies that courageous people all over this continent are using to reach needy children so often overlooked by the established church.

May we continue to learn from one another to sharpen our effectiveness in reaching needy children for Christ.

References

- Joy, D. (2000). *Empower your kids to be adults*. Nappannee, IN: Evangel Publishing House. Jtila, C. (2002).

Children's ministry that works. Loveland, CO: Group Publishers.
Kilbourn, P. (Ed.). (1996).

Children in crisis: A new commitment. Monrovia, CA: World Vision.
Minuchin, P., J. Colapinto & S. Minuchin. (1998).

Working with families of the poor. NY: The Guilford Press.
Payne, R., P. DeVol & T. D. Smith. (2001). *Bridges out of poverty: Strategies for professionals and communities.*
Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

Strommen, M. P. & R. A. Hardel. (2000). *Passing on the faith: A radical new model for youth and family ministry.* Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press.

Stonehouse, C. (1998). *Joining children on the spiritual journey.*
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Dr. Gary C. Newton is Professor of Educational Ministries and Director of the Educational Ministries Program, Graduate School of Christian Ministries at Huntington College, Huntington, IN.

Outreach Through Lutheran Schools: Hands Stretched to the Lost

Willie Stallworth

In 20 years of service with outreach through Lutheran schools my love has deepened for this very special ministry within my beloved Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS). Outreach seems to be taking on greater importance as congregations are realizing that their existence rests on how well they reach out to their community. This is especially true for urban settings and congregations in Black Ministry. The history of most of these congregations transcends the lines of transitioning and mission start congregations. With the history of having been impacted by urban unrest and sprawl, congregations struggle with conducting a meaningful and effective outreach plan. Many urban centers, those that didn't close, were left to carry on in communities not accustomed to the Lutheran tradition. However, many congregations possess a very valuable tool for carrying out effective outreach, i.e., the Lutheran elementary school - one of the most effective outreach avenues available to our church today. The overriding challenge is how we use the Lutheran school to impact or reverse a downward trend in congregation membership. Urban and inner city congregations must become empowered to carry out effective outreach ministry. Their first step must be to connect with LCMS leadership and resources.

Assessing the status of your ministry will help in visualizing the direction and mission for your congregation utilizing the school as an outreach vehicle. Signs appropriate for measuring inner cities churches' state of health and viability are: 1) a poorly mobilized laity who are unaware of their spiritual gifts; 2) an improper balance of the relationship between worship (celebration) and the opportunity for small group fellowship; 3) a lack of a unified, planned strategy for evangelism; and 4) priorities reflecting a lack of a biblical basis (Wagner, p 188).

Visioning is key to the development of any outreach initiative. Casting your vision must include empowerment of all involved; it should stand the test of time so that staff members will feel that their efforts are going to be built upon from year to year. A vision for outreach should allow for buy-in by all parties of the congregation's ministry. Everyone should be

inspired by the opportunity to reach out to the un-churched. Be sure that your outreach vision prepares for the future, but honors the past. Often congregations develop an unwillingness to let go of the past and fear that new members will bring about change. The opportunity for members to be a part of the outreach plan should be a part of the brainstorming process. A clear and challenging vision will give a feeling of encouragement and a positive intent to reach out with the Gospel.

Developing a Plan for Outreach

A plan for effective outreach must demonstrate an ability to infuse the congregation's gifts throughout the school ministry. The framework for developing a mind set for outreach will depend on the school staff's ability to think beyond the classroom and realize that what they do to share the Gospel with students will impact the lives of their students' parents. Developing and maintaining relationships will create opportunities to speak with parents and share your faith with them. Outreach through a Lutheran school must be led by the school staff for they are the point of contact with parents and their children; they are in a position to develop relationships that parents will respect and value. Outreach through Lutheran schools must exist within a personalized feeling of comfort by parents, children, teachers and congregation members that shows caring and love for the un-churched. Teachers should select prospective outreach children and their families based on their relationship with them. No limit should be set on how many or how few teachers can plan to begin a faith walk with families. It is very important that time is spent searching for a scriptural source that will speak to you and give focus to your desire to reach, touch and make a difference in the lives of the un-churched. Matthew 28:19-20, The Great Commission, is always a great scripture to use as a basis for any outreach effort.

Congregation members must be involved in the outreach plan of the school; no outreach plan will be effective if the ones claiming the efforts are not fully a part of it. When parents and children attend church and Sunday School they must immediately be connected with the mainstream of outreach thinking members or they will feel that their connection is only with the school; with people that relate to them and the educational needs of their children. Congregation members must be the host for children and parent's church visits. Being involved in the visit and helping them to understand the nature of worship, introducing them to other members, making follow up phone calls after the visit is completed, and being a buffer between the school's staff and the pastor's office will

add more hands to the outreach plan. Members' greatest contributions are made when they daily pray for parents and children. Members should let parents know that they are praying for them.

Selecting resources that will be helpful in guiding your outreach plan is essential to a smooth flow between congregation leaders and the school staff. The LCMS Department of Child Ministry provides an excellent resource and one that I have had the pleasure of utilizing in my workshops addressing outreach through Lutheran schools. The resource,

Hand-In-Hand, initially designed as an outreach strategy for Lutheran early childhood centers, works very well at the elementary level as well. It is adaptable to any direction that a school would like to take its outreach plan. Connecting with district leaders is a good resource to have available, however, your outreach plan must continue to maintain school staff and congregation ownership.

Building Your Outreach Team

Developing your outreach team is key to the success of your outreach efforts. The philosophy of the team should be rooted in a spirit that's driven by a desire to bring new members into the church. The numbers of un-churched children in Lutheran schools are ever increasing (over 35 thousand according to the 2000-2001 *Statistical Report Summary*); this is cause enough to become motivated to reach out through schools. However, no staff member should be a part of the outreach team against his or her will: only those willing and excited about outreach should lead the process. Others may come aboard at a later time and always keep the doors open for others to take part. When the school staff has organized, identified, and invited congregation members to join the team, an orientation for the team should take place that includes a common vision, intentionality (goals and strategies), an involved faith community, a pastoral presence, friendliness, acceptance, and care and support for the ideas and efforts of others.

The congregation members, the faith community, may be the greatest challenge in casting the vision. Including them at the early stages of the planning will render the greatest success. Making sure that the vision is a shared vision of the whole ministry will lead to ownership of the ministry's outreach plan. Keep in mind that once members are excited the momentum will require more planning and a stronger effort by the school's leadership for outreach.

Carrying Out Your Outreach Plan

There are a number of factors for consideration in carrying out your outreach plan. 1) The outreach team should develop a letter or memo announcing to the students and parents the congregation's school outreach plan. 2) The staff members should be encouraged to select a child and their parents that they would like to begin a faith journey walk with. 3) After the selections are made the staff member should contact their partner and share with them how excited they are to have them as their faith journey partner. 4) The outreach team should plan a joint reception for all the outreach partners. This should be done in an environment that is friendly and relaxed that will allow for everyone to celebrate being involved in the endeavor of outreach. No major agenda item should dominate the schedule. 5) Staff members should make contact with their faith journey partners on a daily basis; they may send them a note letting them know that they are thinking about them and they may make a special effort to greet them if they are not a student in their own classroom. 6) Parents may be given a phone call with a special invitation to church and Sunday School. 7) Again, always pray for your faith journey partners daily and as often as possible, this is one of the most powerful tools that you can use for outreach. 8) Remember that your outreach effort is a personal effort to reach out and bring the un-churched into the church; you are acting out your own Christian faith. You are reaching out to one or two children per year, if the opportunity and desire arises you may select additional partners. Do not feel that an extra burden is forced upon you - allow yourself to be driven by your outreach scripture.

Called to Serve

As Lutheran educators, called by God, we are to reach and teach his children. Because so many children and their parents are not baptized and do not attend church nor practice their faith, through our faith, we are to work to win the world for Christ here on earth by reaching out to them within the context of Lutheran schools. This is the avenue that the Lord has given us to reach them with the Gospel. The Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ must be shared beyond the school walls and from within the church walls. The Gospel is clearly intended for all people. Lutherans are committed to the concept of the Gospel as transcultural, i.e., equally intended for and effective within all cultures (Johnson, 1991, p. 232). Lutheran educators are in a position to reach across cultural lines and teach the truth of Jesus Christ's suffering, dying and resurrection to those who do not understand and know his power

and will for them. The classrooms of Lutheran schools across the LCMS are increasingly more diverse. I believe that they are so in order that the Gospel, the Great Commission, may reach more people.

Dr. Rosa Young, one of the noted pioneers of LCMS mission schools, and responsible for starting over 30 schools in Alabama alone, was faced with many of the same challenges that we are faced with today in our Lutheran schools - reaching the un-churched. I'm encouraged by her words and perhaps you will be too.

"Pray for me that I may continue in the faith of my dear Lutheran Church, so that, when civilization shall confess like a weary traveler upon a dusty roadÖI have gone as far as I can, when all the achievements of mankind shall have crumbled beneath the iron-clad hoofs of time, and the time itself shall be swallowed up in the vast sea of eternity, even thus, as you sit by the river of life making sweet melody with your heavenly harps, I, with thousands of people whom God will have led from the spiritual darkness can be heard singing praises to Jesus, the Savior of sinners, whom I have learned to know so well through His Word in our Lutheran Schools." (Young, 1930, p.148)

There will be joy in leading others closer to Jesus, trust him to guide you and give you direction. Pray that he will order your steps in His word.

This article was written to inspire, motivate, and encourage everyone associated with a Lutheran school, especially a mission or urban school, to place their hands in the hands of the un-churched and place both sets of hands in Jesus' hands. Lutheran schools are great mission fields waiting to be harvested for the sake of the Gospel. I implore every teacher faced with the situation of not knowing what to do when most of the children that sit in their classroom every day are un-churched, to raise their voices, and seek to become an advocate for them. Seek to make outreach a vital part of the congregation's mission. With prayer and a sincere heart God will open the ears and hearts of people to hear your cry, he will provide the direction, leadership, resources and means to bring the un-churched into the fold of confessing and worshipping believers.-LEA

References

- Johnson, J. (1991). *Black Christians -The untold story*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.
- Young, R. (1930). *Light in the dark belt*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. District and Congregational Services. Schools and Early Childhood Centers. (2001, May). *Statistical Report Summary*.

Mr. Willie Stallworth is Director of Education and Family Life, LCMS, St. Louis, MO.

Poised on the Edge of Chaos

Shirley J. Miske

(This essay is reprinted from her commencement address at Concordia University, River Forest, IL, December 14, 2002.)

Members of the Board of Regents, President Heider, esteemed faculty, honored guests, and especially you, graduates of the last Class of 2002:

You will change the world! Is that not magnificent news to hear—especially after investing thousands of hours and thousands of dollars in your university education? I think all graduates want to hear that, and as graduates of Concordia University-River Forest, my alma mater, you *should* hear that. You *will* change the world!

We alumni who preceded you for the past 137 years have striven to be faithful servants and thoughtful leaders. We have sought to live out our callings in life with dignity and integrity. Through this we have influenced lives and shaped people's outlook on the world. We *have* changed the world, and so will you.

Based on the title of this address, "Poised on the Edge of Chaos," you may have expected to hear different opening words. To be "poised on the edge of chaos" brings to mind a balancing act on the brink of *disorder*, or being out of control rather than changing the world.

At some point in your lives or academic careers you probably have found yourselves on the edge of chaos. More than once you may have felt overwhelmed trying to write papers, read articles, and balance work schedules with family obligations. Or you may have felt on the edge of chaos as you tried to register for courses using the new Banner computer software, or as you tried to make sense of countless news stories of a nation at war in ways that are invisible to most of us.

In contrast to these chaotic images of life teetering on the edge of disorder and total loss of control, is the chaos of chaos theory, the third major scientific theory to come out of the 20th century. In this theory, chaos refers specifically to "sensitive dependence on initial conditions" in systems, the behavior of which is seemingly impossible to predict—such as weather systems or the stock market.

A slight change in the initial conditions of chaotic systems is called the butterfly effect. The idea behind the butterfly effect is that the mere fluttering of a butterfly's wings can lead to drastically different conditions in the atmosphere in different parts of the world. For example, the small amount of turbulence introduced into a weather system by the flapping of a butterfly's wings in Illinois can lead, over time, to a storm in Ethiopia. Or the flutter of a butterfly's wings in Sri Lanka can prevent a tornado in Chicago.

Some suggest that we think of the butterfly effect as a scientific version of the classic Christmas movie *It's a Wonderful Life* (Gutowskii, Robinson, & Shirer, n.d.). In this movie we discover how different everyone's life would have been without George Bailey.

George was a kindly banker who always placed human need above riches. As a result his only visible wealth was his friends and family. When personal and financial troubles drove George to the point of despair, his lovable, bumbling guardian angel granted George one wish: to see what the world would have been like if he had never been born. Together George and his angel observed how different many people's lives would have been had he not been part of their lives.

George's actions in life were like the fluttering of a butterfly's wings in a chaotic system. They made a difference.

Let's extend this image. Imagine how different your life would have been without the influence of professors, administrators, and colleagues at Concordia, or without the support of family and friends while going through your program here.

See the wings of the butterfly flap and flutter.

Parents, family members, friends, and colleagues, imagine how different your lives would have been without the educational pursuits and presence of these graduates.

Can you see the butterfly's wings flap and flutter?

As you recall the impact that all these people at Concordia have had on you, Graduates, also envisage the impact that you have had on them. Consider the influence that you will continue to have on those around you and on the systems in which you live and work.

I can just see the wings of the butterfly flap and flutter!

At present, 130 million children around the world who should be in elementary school are not. Two-thirds of them are girls. Most live in countries marked by extreme poverty and by patriarchal social systems. The poverty is characterized by average annual incomes of less than \$600 per year. The patriarchy is manifested in such attitudes as: if a family can afford to educate just one child, then it should be a boy—whether or not he is the brightest in the family. And a girl should spend one to two hours more per day working at home than her brothers, because she is a girl, and girls do the housework.

For the past decade, governments, donor organizations, researchers, and others have been asking, “How can we get these children - and especially these 86 million girls - into school and ensure that they complete their education?”

In an effort to answer that question, five years ago I was part of a team charged by USAID (United States Agency for International Development), the relief and development arm of the US government, with examining girls’ education projects in five countries. We learned through this study that to get girls into school, programs and systems have to focus on the girls. It is not sufficient to try to improve education for all children. When we plan programs to improve education in general in developing countries, then education improves for boys. Conditions for girls remain the same.

When, however, village schools are established that have women teachers from the community, as in Pakistan, then more parents enroll their daughters in school. Or when theater troupes put on plays that show the community the obstacles they have placed in the way of girls’ education, as in Malawi, then more girls are allowed to go to school. Or if girls are given scholarships through grade four, as in Guatemala, then more girls stay and finish an elementary school education.

Alicia’s parents in the highlands of Guatemala could not afford to send her to school. They intended to send only her brother. But Alicia and other girls in her class were promised several dollars per month in scholarship money if they would faithfully attend and do well in school. When Alicia’s parents heard this, they realized they would have more money for food for the entire family if Alicia attended school. So they decided to send her to first grade and they encouraged her to do well. Her mother even told her to worry first about her homework and then to be concerned about the housework.

The strategies our evaluation team observed and about which we wrote were based on stories such as Alicia's. Similar programs are being implemented on a larger scale today in those countries and in other areas of the world where governments struggle to meet the goal of Education for All, that is, ensuring all children are in school by the year 2015.

Governments are using successful strategies from Latin America to develop education programs for girls in Sub-Saharan Africa. Governments of the Middle East/North Africa are adapting viable strategies from Asia to promote girls' education in their region. Girls - the largest group of children excluded from school - are being included in larger numbers than ever before.

Can you see the wings of the butterfly flap and flutter?

A recent issue of *The Forester* reminded us that we are living in a "whole new world." So here you are, poised on the edge of chaos in a whole new world: What will you do?

You will go forward with confidence since you have been equipped, as Concordia's mission statement says, to "serve and lead with integrity, creativity, competence, and compassion in a diverse, interconnected church and world." Here at the university you have sharpened your intellect and your analytical skills. You have developed your physical and artistic talents. And you have learned and experienced through life in the Concordia community that you are loved and you are forgiven. The community of faith in this place regularly gives witness to its devotion, love, and service to the risen Christ. Empowered by His love, you will do many things, according to your wide range of gifts and abilities.

One other amazing characteristic of chaotic systems is that they seem to be messy, random, and unpredictable. Upon closer examination, however, they show patterns and predictability. Patterns begin to emerge from the chaos. Order emerges from disorder. Connections appear in place of what we had thought previously were only random occurrences.

As you continue to discover the patterns and the interconnections in the chaotic systems of our world, you will have sparkling opportunities to serve and to lead. You will be able to make connections between your lives and the lives of those who often are excluded from the mainstream of the community, the country, and the world.

Those of you who are teachers and school administrators can create

opportunities to connect the lives of your students with the girls and boys of Guatemala, Pakistan, and Malawi, and with the children of central city Chicago or Detroit.

Others of you will enter or return to positions in management, business, hospitals, non-profit or other organizations, or self-employment. You also will have marvelous opportunities to make connections with those who have been excluded from the mainstream, i.e., those who live in poverty, and those who live with HIV/AIDS and other illnesses.

As you make these connections, poised on the edge of chaos, the wings of the butterfly will flap and flutter. You will be among those who, by the grace of God, make a difference and introduce change into chaotic systems. You *will* change the world.

Thank You! And congratulations to you all.—*LEA*

References

Gutowskii, M., T. Robinson, & N. Shirer. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ems.psu.edu/explore/Chaos.html>.

Dr. Shirley J. Miske received her undergraduate education from Concordia Teachers College, continued her education at Stanford University and earned a doctorate from Michigan State University. During her teaching career she served schools in New England, Guatemala and Hong Kong. After returning to the U.S., Miske served as the assistant program manager of the Michigan State University – Lakeview School District Japanese Saturday School program. She later was appointed as the executive associate for Women's Concerns in Chiang Mai, Thailand and has recently served as the advisor of International Affairs at Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Miske has served the church and her profession faithfully through teaching, leadership, and research. She has worked with UNICEF and other organizations to design programs, develop networks and draft leadership documents. Her current activities include drafting "Curriculum," a comprehensive working document for UNICEF Education Officers, preparing an evaluation of schools in Malawi and conducting a research project on women's studies in Asia.

Administrative Talk: The Learned Principal vs. the Learning Principal

Glen Kuck

A high school freshman walked out of his math class with a gloomy look on his face. The principal noticed the boy and asked, "How are we today?"

The boy responded, "Terrible. I don't understand all that stuff about things like hypotenuses and square roots."

In his effort to comfort the student, the principal replied, "I'm sure we'll eventually understand it, won't we?"

The boy retorted, "That's easy for *we* to say. But the *you* half of *we* doesn't have to learn that stuff all over again like the *me* half of *we* does."

The idea that learning is only for students is widespread. Students can easily get the impression that learning is just for young people and that once a person gets to a certain age, he can stop. With that mindset, learning becomes something to endure, something to graduate from, something to tolerate. Once old enough, a person can put it away like an unused tricycle.

I've observed over the years that teachers can usually get students interested in a subject that they, the teachers, are interested in, but find it difficult to get students excited about subjects that they aren't enthused about themselves. There's something about the teacher's desire to share and to learn more about a subject that inspires students. The interest, the spark, the joy a teacher feels toward a subject is contagious. So is the lack thereof.

It's often been said that teachers teach more by what they are than by what they say. The same is true of principals. It's essential for principals to be models of a myriad of good qualities - solid work ethic, integrity, reliability, faithfulness, understanding, self-control, leadership, and so forth. But perhaps the most crucial quality for a principal to model is the desire to keep learning.

Roland Barth points out that new teachers are insatiable learners. A beginning teacher will do practically anything to learn more about his craft and to find things that work in the classroom. His learning curve remains high for two or three years. Then, "He finds some things that do work well, and he *enshrines* them. It's Halloween - out comes my Halloween folder. It's Martin Luther King Day - out comes my Martin

Luther King folder. For the principal, it's out comes the 'first faculty meeting of the year' folder, then the 'first parent night of the year' folder, and then the 'awards assembly' folder. Next September will be the same as last September. Once our practice is committed to a folder, once routinization and repetition replace invention, learning curves plummet" (Barth, 2001, p. 22).

The lack of desire to continue learning on the part of a principal has a trickle-down effect. Teachers, then students are affected. "I've yet to see a school where the learning curves of the youngsters are off the chart upward while the leaning curves of the adults are off the chart downward," Barth notes, "or a school where the learning curves of the adults were steep upward and those of the students were not. Teachers and students go hand in hand as learners – or they don't go at all" (p. 23).

It's essential for a principal to be what Barth calls the "leading learner" in school. When a principal consistently works to enhance his knowledge base, it shows. When a principal discusses educational issues with colleagues, takes classes, works to fill gaps in his own education, reads about his profession, delves into new areas of learning, becomes actively engaged in seminars, shares his discoveries at workshops, shows interest in students' projects, and learns together with students – he creates a school environment that allows learning by all to thrive. It's immaterial whether or not the teachers and students observe all of his learning activities. His desire to grow and learn will trickle down to them.

Principals can be put into either of two categories. They can be learned, or they can be learners. The term "learned" conjures up thoughts of one who is well-schooled, degreed, venerable, and able to impart knowledge to those who seek it. But it also connotes one who is staid and is content with the education already achieved. Principals can't afford to be considered learned.

On the other hand, a principal who is a learner is continuing to grow and is not content with the status quo. He is engaged in learning more. He works to get better. He becomes part of the community of learners. His attitude accentuates the need for the continual pursuit of knowledge and wisdom by everyone within the school. Principals can't afford not to be learners. As Eric Hoffer phrases it, "In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists" (p. 28).

The joy of learning for the sake of learning, of discovering new nuggets of information, of making connections which were previously unseen, and of having new fields of knowledge opened up is as exhilarating for the seasoned veterans of a faculty as it is for the school's youngest students. –LEA

Multiplying Ministries: Hope is the Difference!

Rich Bimler

Show me a hope-filled person and I will show you a healthy person – in the Lord!

I still remember my speaker at my 8th grade graduation (over 100 years ago) who told this story: “Once there were two moths. One moth hoped that he could some day reach the nearest street light. The other moth hoped that one day he could reach the moon. The first moth met his goal and burned up quickly. The second moth is, no doubt, still trying to reach the moon!”

Without analyzing this tidbit that closely, this is a story of hope. I would contend that hope is the elevating feeling we experience when we see a path to a better future. It certainly acknowledges the significant barriers along that path, but a true hope is always focused on a better future. I have observed that one of the biggest differences in the attitude and mindset of people is whether or not they have hope.

Many of us confuse hope with optimism, a prevailing attitude that “things will turn out for the best”. But hope is much different than optimism. Hope does not arise from being told to “think positively” or from hearing an overly positive forecast. Hope, unlike optimism, is rooted in unalloyed reality. The hope we as God’s people is the hope of the Resurrection now and eternally.

Pastor Mitri Raheb, Pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Palestine, says it this way: “Many people of many faiths believe in a life after death. Christians do also. But Christians believe, not only in life after death, but also in a life before death!”

Hope is knowing that even when there is no hope there is hope, in Christ! Christian hope has nothing to do with the belief that tomorrow is going to be better than today. As Richard Rohr says in his book, Hope Against Darkness, “Christ is present and that is enough reason for a foundation of health and hope, even if all else is falling apart. Jesus seems to be saying that if even one mustard seed is blooming, or one dime found or a sheep recovered – that is enough

reason for a big party! Even a small indicator of God is still an indicator of God, and therefore an indicator of reason, meaning and final joy. A little bit of God goes a long way.”

So, the big question to each of us is, “where is our hope?” Or more theologically stated, “Who is our hope?” The good news of the Gospel is that even when we do not act, feel or look like there is hope, there continues to be hope – in our Lord Jesus Christ! In a

stimulating book by Jerome Groopman, The Anatomy of Hope, this medical doctor puts it this way:

“Hope, I have come to believe, is as vital to our lives as the very oxygen that we breathe.” He continues, “The question – why some people find and hold onto hope while others do not, was what moved me to write this book. There is no one simple answer. But insights can be drawn from my experiences that for many who cannot see hope, their vision is blurred because they believe they are unable to exert any level of control over their circumstances.”

In other words, when there is no future, there is no hope.

Remarkable, by the way, that Jeremiah puts it this way in Chapter 29, Verse 11: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Coincidental? I don’t think so!

Henri Nouwen wrote much about hope. He talks a lot about “hoping” and “wishing”. He says that many people have trouble waiting for something to happen. “Open-ended waiting is hard for us because we tend to wait for something very concrete, for something that we wish to have. Much of our waiting is filled with wishes: “I wish that the weather would be better”. “I wish that the pain would go away” We are full of wishes, and our waiting easily gets entangled in those wishes. For this reason, a lot of our waiting is not open-ended. Instead, our waiting is a way of controlling the future. We want the future to go in a very specific direction, and if this does not happen, we are disappointed and can even slip into despair. That is why we have such a hard time waiting. We want to do the things that will make the desired events take place. Here we can see how wishes tend to be connected with fears.”

But Zachariah, Elizabeth and Mary were not filled with wishes. They were filled with hope. Hope is something very different. Hope is trusting that something will be fulfilled, but fulfilled according to the promises and not

just according to our wishes. Therefore, hope is always open-ended. Nouwen goes on to say that only when he was willing to let go of his wishes that something really new, something beyond his own expectations, could begin to happen to him.

And so, our Call is to hope in the Lord! Our mission is to help others catch the vision of our Lord's hope for life eternal and life with Him, not just in heaven, but right now today in our daily lives.

Let me suggest that the word HOPE can help us to remember this:

That hope is

H – having

O – opportunities to

P – practice

E – Easter

Hope literally does make all the difference in the world!

Not only for a moth seeking the moon, but more significantly to children, youth and adults who know that the Lord brings health and hope to them each day, in the name of the healing Christ!

What a difference a life of HOPE makes! —*LEA*

Who Are We? Our Search for Identity

Craig Parrott

I confess at the outset that I have always been uncomfortable with the push for multiculturalism in education, especially Christian education. I have sensed that it somehow misses the mark and is going backward rather than forward.

Now I can hear some brothers and sisters cautioning me and reminding me that Paul became all things to all people and that he intentionally handled Jews differently than Gentiles. I won't argue that point. But I have never had the impression from his epistles that Paul *emphasized* one's earthly ethnicity. Rather, he told the Ephesians, "You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." (Eph. 2:19-20)

Although I am suspicious of ideas that become best sellers (i.e. *The Prayer of Jabez* and *The Left Behind* series), Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* does contain one major truth that we would do well to remember from time to time: it is not about us. And I believe that discussing differences and focusing on creating multi-ethnic missions is a subtle form of believing that life is about us. Frankly, I believe our Lutheran secondary schools have something much greater to offer the white, Hispanic, African American, Asian males and females that sit in our classrooms. And Paul tells us what it is in Ephesians 1:17-19:

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

We all share the same ancestral past that matters—

Adam. But even then, Paul does not encourage us to dig into this past and, if we do, we dare not glory in it! On the other hand, Paul prays that we know our heavenly Father better, the hope he calls us to, his inheritance, and his power. Life is all about God and not about us.

But our flesh persists in finding our identity in anything or anyone other than God. We want to be unique and special. We want to find our place in the universe. We want to discover what our personal contribution to mankind will be. So we fix our eyes on our cultural heritage or our age or our sex or our talents. We keep looking in all the wrong places.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (I John 3:1) C.S. Lewis concludes *Mere Christianity* with this very thought. God is transforming us from being creatures of God to being sons of God. “To become new men means losing what we now call ‘ourselves.’ Out of ourselves, into Christ, we must go. The more we get what we now call ‘ourselves’ out of the way and let him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become. Until you have given up your self to Him you will not have a real self. Sameness is to be found most among the most ‘natural’ men, not among those who surrender to Christ. Christ will indeed give you a real personality: but you must not go to him for the sake of that. As long as your own personality is what you are bothering about you are not going to him at all. The very first step is to try to forget about the self altogether. Your real, new self will not come as long as you are looking for it. It will come when you are looking for Him. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life.” —LEA

A Final Word

Fred Boos

Each of us is a unique child of God. No two individuals look the same, act the same, or even think the same. God's creation is one of diversity.

Over the last two years I have been privileged to serve with fellow faculty and staff members on Concordia's Strengthening Inclusive Ministries Taskforce. This Taskforce is charged with the task of providing educational opportunities for faculty, staff, and students concerning issues of diversity. Over the past year we have conducted several workshops for faculty and staff that have addressed the issue of racism. The goal was to raise awareness and provide a forum where these issues can be discussed.

The workshops have raised the awareness of many faculty and staff to the subtle and not so subtle ways that racism is present in our society and on our campus. Many have learned how various actions and comments, which were not intended to cause offense in fact, can be offensive to individuals who are of a different race. The Taskforce has much to accomplish to make the entire campus more acutely aware of various forms of racism on campus. This is partly because the "old Adam" within us often desires uniformity and conformity. Haven't you on occasion wished that everyone on a committee would be of a like mind because you believed it would be so much easier to move forward if we all thought and acted alike. Haven't you sometimes thought interpersonal relations would be less difficult if everyone's actions, thoughts, and beliefs could be predicted? Have you ever thought there would be less strife if everyone looked like you?

Although we may occasionally wish for uniformity, our Creator had a greater plan. When God was creating the world he created diversity. He created all types of animals and plants. He placed people on the earth that have a free will, who think, act, and look different from one another. What a marvelous plan. We are unique, but yet we are all the same. We are all redeemed children of God who need to celebrate the diversity of our brothers and sisters in Christ. —LEA

Manfred B. Boos, Acting President, Concordia University, River Forest, IL.

Guidelines for Submissions to *Lutheran Education*

Lutheran Education intends to publish the best research and reflection on a wide range of topics relevant to Lutheran Christian education. The journal welcomes manuscripts addressing Lutheran education at all levels from early childhood to higher education, in the classroom or in the parish. First consideration is given to well documented articles which may provide theological context on Lutheran education, explore issues specific to Lutheran education, or which either present for the first time or discuss the implications of recent educational developments for Lutheran education.

1. Format for Submission: The preferred format in which to receive manuscripts is in Microsoft Word via documents attached to an email. Please limit formatting as much as possible (specifically multiple fonts, type sizes, headers/footers, boldface, etc.) as these must be removed and/or changed when creating copy for the printer. Second preference would be documents submitted on a 3.5 inch floppy disk or on CD-Rom.

2. Length: Manuscripts may range from approximately 2000-5000 words. The editors reserve the right to request modifications.

3. Style and Documentation: Style and documentation in the journal are governed by the most recent edition of *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*; *Webster's New International Dictionary* is consulted in matters of spelling.

4. Contact: Manuscripts, article proposals or related inquiries may be made to:

Dr. William Rietschel, Co-Editor
Lutheran Education (Journal)
Concordia University
7400 Augusta Street
River Forest, IL 60305-1499

E-mail: crfriegtschecwe@curf.edu

